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A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History



Spanish Voyagers on the Pacific Coast in the 18th Century

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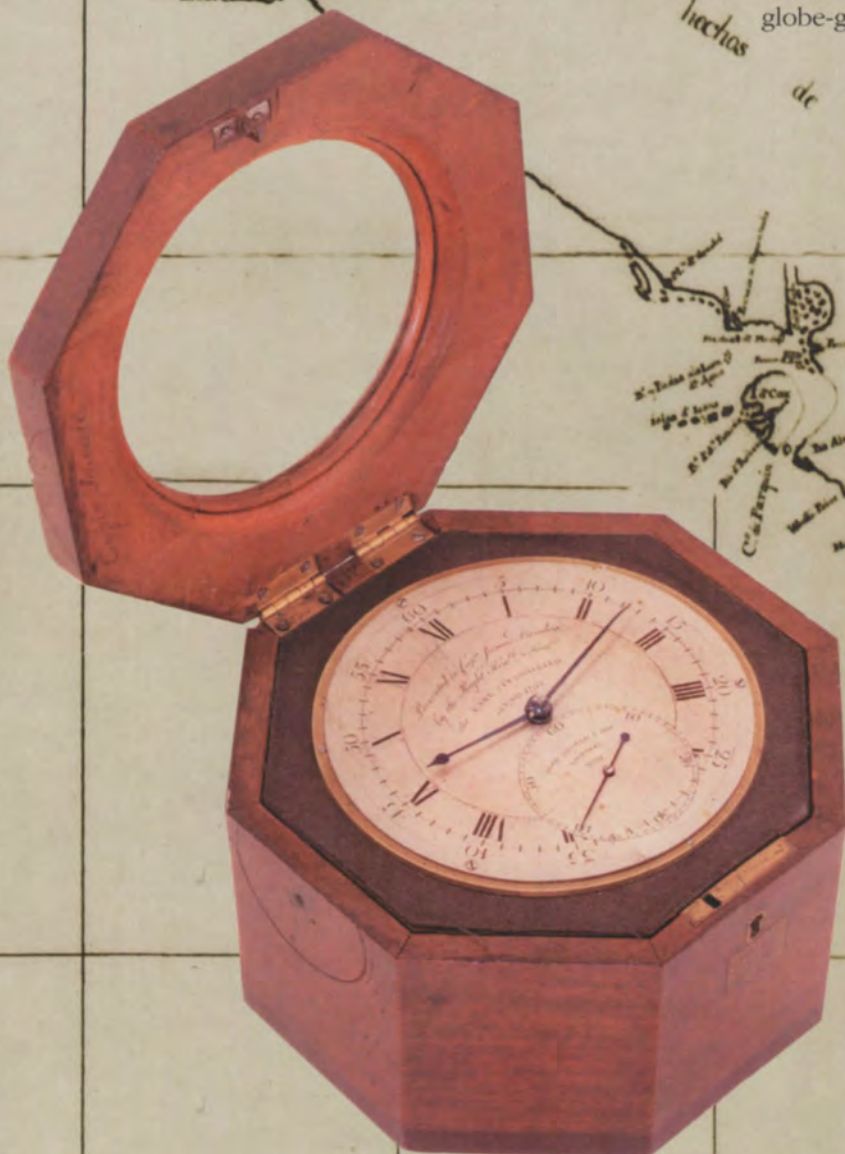
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*"Mains'l Haul"—An order in tacking
ship bidding 'Swing the main yards'.
To loot, steal, or 'acquire'."*

—John Masefield

Chronometers, like this 1792 example made in London by Arnold and Son, permitted reliable measurements of longitude for the first time. The inability to reliably establish longitude bedeviled Spanish voyagers, including many of those in the following articles. Alejandro Malaspina, however, carried an Arnold chronometer on his globe-girdling voyage.



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MAINS'L HAUL

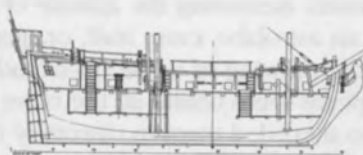
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The *San Carlos* as she probably looked in 1769, reconstructed by maritime historian Raymond Aker. Since the time that he completed this drawing, Mr. Aker has concluded that her appearance was probably slightly different in two respects. See "So Extended and Painful a Voyage," in this issue.

Ship drawing courtesy Raymond Aker.

Map detail from La América Septentrional, 1802.



From the editor:

The previous issue was incorrectly labeled as vol. 36 no. 4, when it was in fact vol. 35 no. 4. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

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We welcome submissions on the maritime history of the Pacific, and encourage the widest variety of perspectives on this rich heritage. For advertising rates and information, please contact the Advertising Sales Manager at (619) 234-9153.

When we think of the great age of European exploration in the Pacific, we are often accustomed to understanding "discovery" in terms of taking possession. Certainly the rituals described in the historical voyage accounts help us to imagine this: the raising of flags and crosses, public proclamations of ownership, construction of the first European style buildings (usually fortresses and churches), and the renaming of prominent bays, points, rivers, and islands after European saints, ships, political patrons, or even after the explorers themselves. What is often missing from our mental reconstructions of such pageantry is the simple enabling act from which all the others followed: measuring the altitude of the sun or a star with an astrolabe, cross staff, or quadrant, followed by the drawing of a line (of latitude) on a chart. For Europeans were unlike all the other seafaring peoples who preceded them in discovery of Pacific territories. European mariners *never* claimed possession of a place until they had first established its position on a chart. All other considerations aside, whatever new-found place that Europeans could chart, they might claim to own, and usually did.

By the eighteenth century, the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment had thoroughly intertwined rationalism with nationalism among all the sea powers, adding a new dimension to the enterprise of seafaring.

FROM THE HELM

by Ray Ashley,
Director

The intellectual process of rendering the natural world into a set of mathematically defined laws, particularly the laws of motion, is something the historian of science Alexandre Koyré called the "geometrization of [natural] space," when speaking of the scientific revolution.¹ Concurrently, the same ethos to quantify carried over into cartography,

in what the historian of geography David Woodward has more recently termed the "rationalization of [geographical] space."² It was seafaring that forged the first decisive link between the pure hypothetical space of the laws of motion and the vast geographical space of oceanic empires. Through navigational astronomy, voyaging offered the technical means to carry out the project of rendering every aspect of the world into rational terms while also providing the first really compelling evidence that the effort could translate into wealth and power. For the first time, science became more than a branch of philosophy. It supplied the tools, the language, and even a justification for taking possession on

Just beyond this promontory in the Mexican state of Nayarit lie the ruins of San Blas. Standing here in the eighteenth century, one could have seen Spanish ships sailing to colonize and supply California, and explore the Pacific Northwest.

Courtesy Harry Crosby.

an unprecedented worldwide scale.

On the far periphery of European geographical awareness, the West Coast of North America offered a dangerous test of this premise, and we can see this test unfolding through the sequence of articles arranged chronologically within this issue of *Mains'l Haul*. In Mark Allen's paper we read of the voyage of the *San Carlos*, which would lead to the founding of San Diego. As often occurred in such voyages, the *San Carlos* struggled against navigational misinformation as much as storms. Worse, the expedition was nearly annihilated by the random attrition of scurvy, a perplexing disease that rendered the orderly space of latitude and longitude into an expanse of physiological chaos and terror. We see in Vivian C. Fisher's paper on the career of pilot Esteban José Martínez, how navigational expertise provided the main professional qualification for leadership in a politically sensitive expedition to sustain Spain's claims of ownership against British and Russian territorial aspirations in the Pacific Northwest. In this instance, Martínez's seizure of a minor British vessel on this distant frontier led to international crisis and nearly to war. A mix of navigation, scurvy, cartography, and international diplomacy also played a role in the career of Bodega Y Quadra, as we learn in Freeman Tovell's narrative of this important figure. Finally, in Enrique

Porrua's portrayal of Malispina's voyage, we see the full flood of the Spanish Enlightenment turned to discovery just before larger world events, beginning with the French Revolution, brought Spain's revitalized Pacific undertaking to an end.

In the eighteenth century, the North American West Coast was the distant recipient of Spain's "Enlightenment Project." That project was pursued by mariners who struggled at the limits of physical and intellectual capability to transform an oceanic space filled with storms, disease, and dangerous competitors into a rationalized possession. As we look about our own region today, the consequences of that effort to rationalize the world are enormous and they touch every aspect of our lives: universities, research centers, oceanographic and medical institutes, and a burgeoning science-based high tech industry. It is worth remembering that the wealthy and complex community we now live in was once but an altitude measured through the vane of an astrolabe. True to form, we are yet taking possession of it.

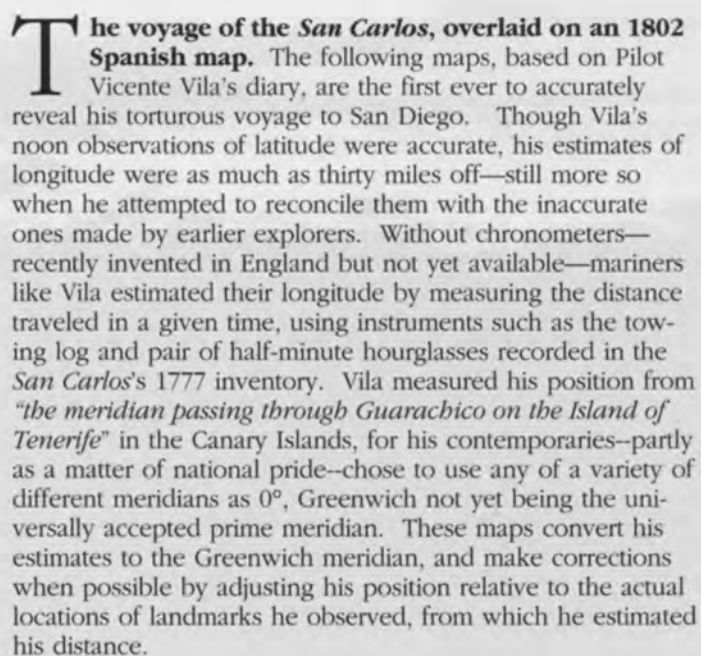
1 Alexandre Koyré, *Galileo Studies* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1978), 73.

2 David Woodward, "Maps and the Rationalization of Geographic Space," in Jay A. Levenson, ed. *Circa 1492, Art in the Age of Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).



A Narrative of
the 1769 Journey
of the *San Carlos*
to San Diego

4



The Spanish colonization of California in 1769, so secure a fact in the history books, was actually a gamble which was very nearly lost. Of the ninety soldiers and sailors who came by sea to secure Spain's claim to California, well over a third lay buried beside San Diego Bay by the year's end. Their story has been told before, but it bears retelling, for in their extraordinary struggle against winds, currents, and geographical misinformation, the voyage highlights the ordinary difficulties all Spanish mariners faced in sailing north off Baja California's coast. Thanks to the surviving diary kept by the captain of the *San Carlos*—one of two ships which carried the first settlers north to Alta California—sufficient information exists to permit maps to be made of the journey, enabling us to visualize it as never before.

The 1769 expedition epitomizes Spain's late-eighteenth-century attempt to accomplish ambitious ends with the meager resources available on the frontier. Mexico, known as New Spain since 1521, was no longer new, and the energetic expansion which had characterized Spain in the Americas had largely drained away with the crown's ebbing fortunes. The one exception was Mexico's northwestern frontier, where the old dynamism was rekindled in 1767.

There, not far from the present-day resort of Puerto Vallarta, among the mangroves in a mosquito-ridden inlet whose sweltering, unhealthy climate one of its commanders called "the terror of humanity," a busy naval base linked New Spain with San Diego and the northwest coast for thirty-five years.¹ The Naval Department of San Blas was the brainchild of a single powerful individual, José de Gálvez, who founded it in 1767 as the base from which to stage the military pacification of Sonora, and from which to launch his plan to colonize Alta California.

The phenomenally ambitious Gálvez had risen from impoverished Andalusian nobility—he had for a time been a shepherd—to become *Visitador General*, the king's special representative in charge of reforming New Spain's policies.² One aspect of his mission was improving frontier defenses, and Gálvez decided to proactively seize Alta California for Spain, based on longstanding fears that a foreign foothold there could cut the Manila galleon trade and provide a base from which to attack the Mexican interior. What finally spurred Spain to act on fears which had been expressed for over a century was a combination of Gálvez's zeal and reports in the 1760s from Spanish diplomats in St. Petersburg that Russia was making probes eastward.³

His expedition to seize California's ports of Monterey and San Diego—San Francisco still being unknown to Europeans—was hurriedly planned and executed with minimal resources; less than three hundred men could be spared. "A maritime expedition was resolved upon," recorded an officer present with Gálvez at a May, 1768 council in San Blas, "and the ships in which it was to be undertaken were assigned, choosing for this purpose the *San Carlos* and the *San Antonio* as vessels of greater size and strength" than the few other tiny craft available.⁴ Just four months after this decision, the *San Carlos* was underway from San Blas to fulfill her mission.

The vessel aboard which so many hopes were riding, also known as the *Toison de Oro*, was sixty-four feet long in the keel with a twenty-three foot beam.⁵ She was one of a pair of *paquebotes*, packets



José de Gálvez. Shepherd, seminarian, struggling lawyer and powerful royal administrator, he was the force behind the Spanish occupation of Alta California.

Mark Allen became editor last year after receiving his Master's degree in History from the University of Colorado. Interested readers may wish to visit the Serra Museum in San Diego's Presidio Park, where a mural, designed while he was curator of exhibits there, depicts the routes of the land and sea expeditions of 1769.



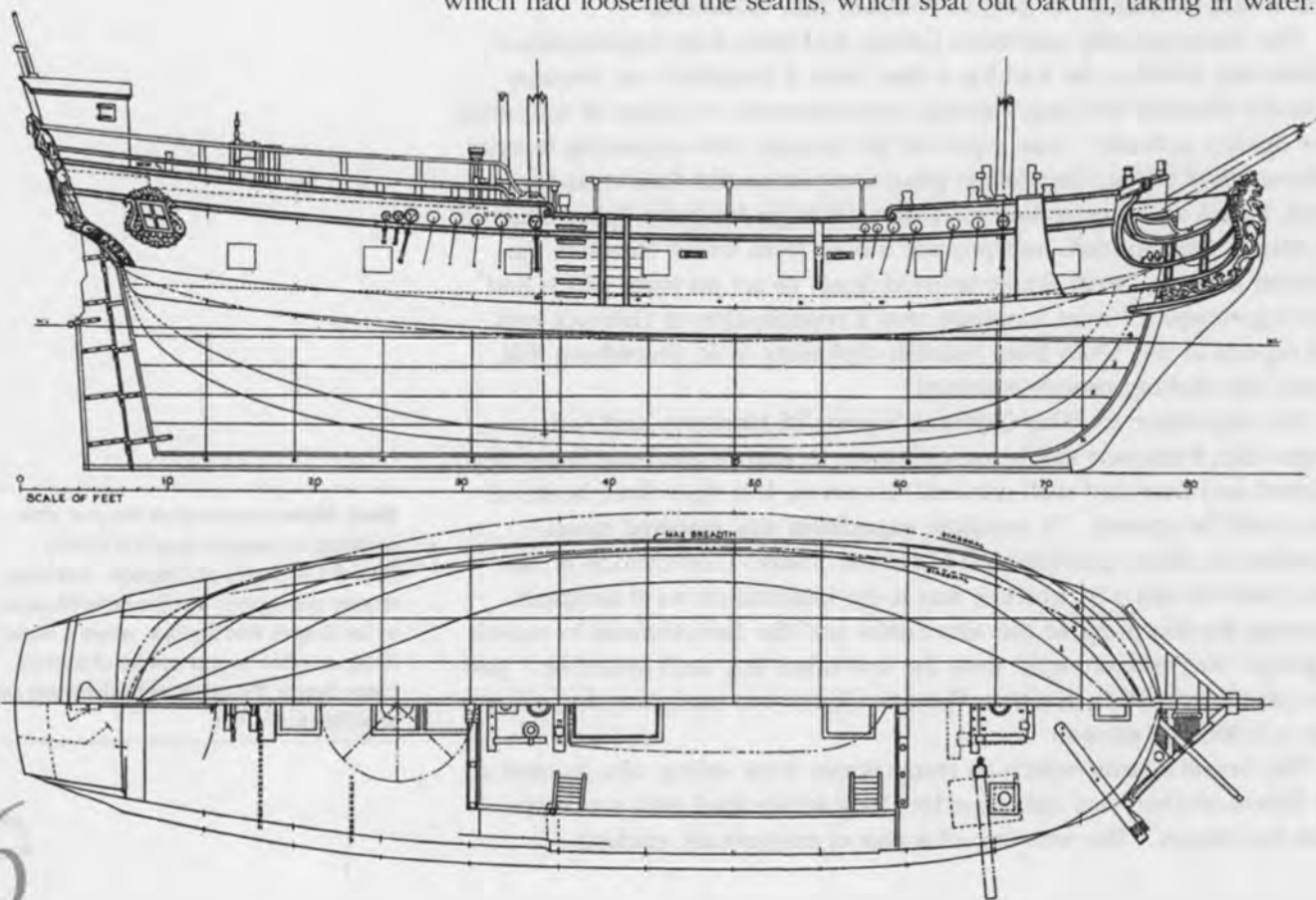
This is perhaps the only sketch made of the *San Carlos* while she existed. Mislabelled *La Goleta Sonora*—a far smaller vessel—it appears on the edge of a 1775 map of the San Francisco Bay region drawn by Father Pedro Font.

constructed of the region's fine timber in the new shipyard upriver from San Blas and launched in 1767.⁶ A shipwright sent from Veracruz built her and her sister ship *San Antonio* as troop carriers, intended to aid military movements in the protracted Indian war in Sonora.

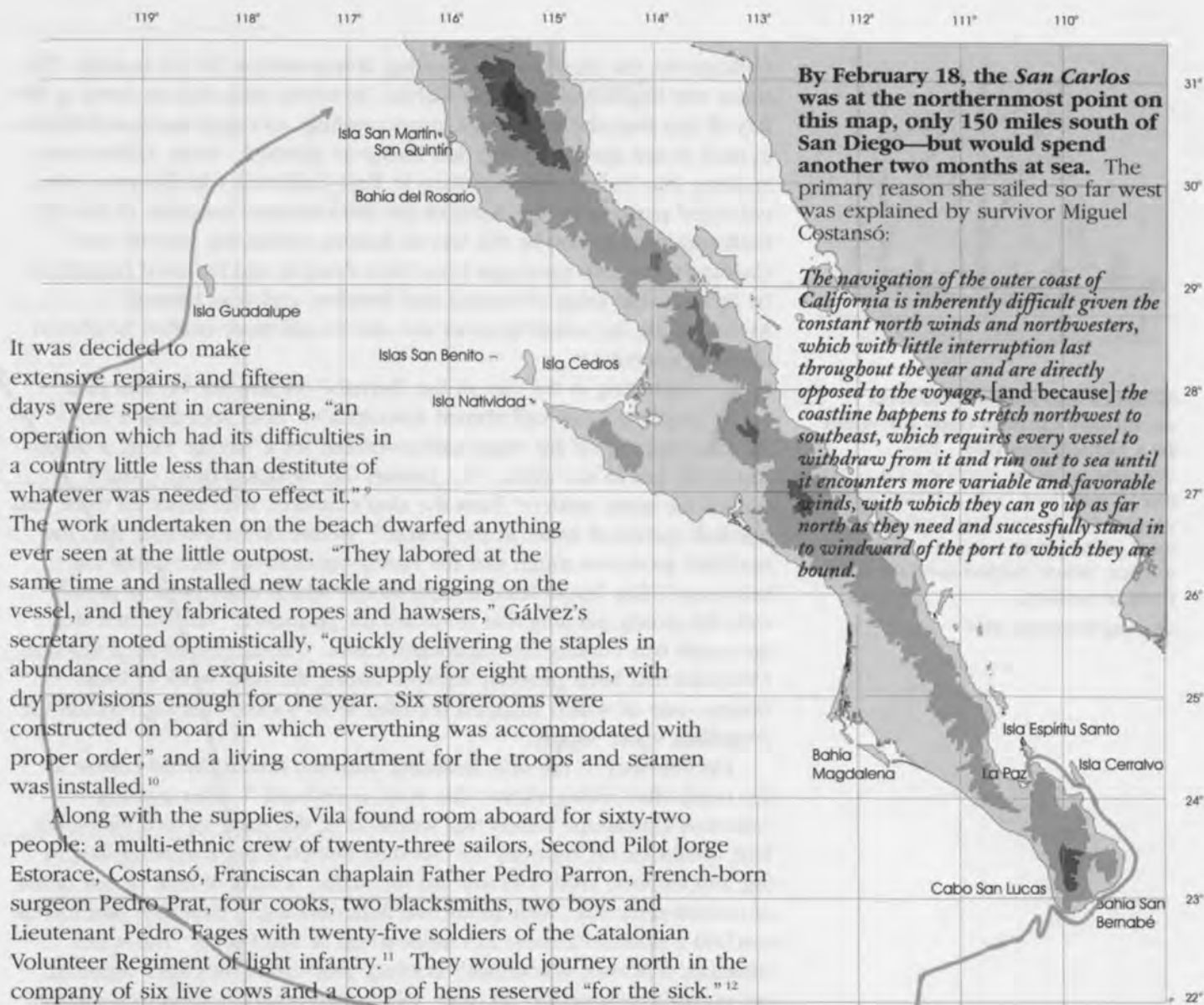
The plan which Gálvez ultimately settled upon for the expedition called for two groups to travel overland to San Diego through Baja California, while the *San Carlos*, after calling in La Paz, would rendezvous with her sister ship at Bahía San Bernabé, near Cabo San Lucas. After arriving together in San Diego, they were to sail on to Monterey to establish a stronghold, while the smaller *San José* would ferry supplies to the beachheads to ensure the expedition's survival.

Gálvez's plans began unraveling almost immediately. He had not reckoned on the winter weather which bedeviled the *San Carlos* and her captain, Vicente Vila, an Andalusian pilot with a decade's experience on capital ships in Spain. After disappearing for three months in a voyage which normally lasted fifteen to twenty days, the *San Carlos* reappeared on Christmas Day, 1768.⁷ Gálvez's secretary reported that "We first witnessed the entrance of the *San Carlos* into the port of La Paz on the twenty-fifth of December, taking aboard more than six inches of water per hour, short of crew, her tackle and rigging in shreds, with two broken anchors; the cargo was damaged except for some barrels of flour and she was without any fresh provisions whatsoever."⁸

The military engineer Miguel Costansó, waiting in La Paz to board her for the long journey north, must have been particularly dismayed: the ship had clearly "labored much on the sea, straining with the winds, which had loosened the seams, which spat out oakum, taking in water."



6



It was decided to make extensive repairs, and fifteen days were spent in careening, "an operation which had its difficulties in a country little less than destitute of whatever was needed to effect it."⁹ The work undertaken on the beach dwarfed anything ever seen at the little outpost. "They labored at the same time and installed new tackle and rigging on the vessel, and they fabricated ropes and hawsers," Gálvez's secretary noted optimistically, "quickly delivering the staples in abundance and an exquisite mess supply for eight months, with dry provisions enough for one year. Six storerooms were constructed on board in which everything was accommodated with proper order," and a living compartment for the troops and seamen was installed.¹⁰

Along with the supplies, Vila found room aboard for sixty-two people: a multi-ethnic crew of twenty-three sailors, Second Pilot Jorge Estorace, Costansó, Franciscan chaplain Father Pedro Parron, French-born surgeon Pedro Prat, four cooks, two blacksmiths, two boys and Lieutenant Pedro Fages with twenty-five soldiers of the Catalan Volunteer Regiment of light infantry.¹¹ They would journey north in the company of six live cows and a coop of hens reserved "for the sick."¹²

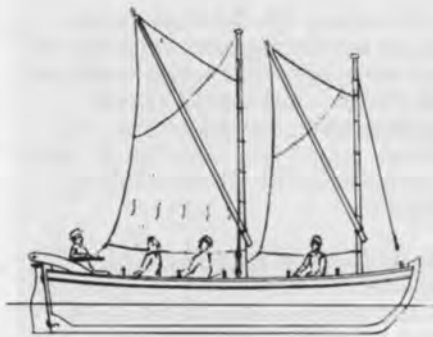
On Sunday morning, January 9, Father Junípero Serra climbed aboard with Gálvez. In the tight space on deck, the newly appointed Father President of the missions planned for Alta California blessed the ship, her flags, and those aboard her; he himself would travel north by land. At midnight, Vila ordered his crew to weigh anchor for the Bay of San Bernabé, and San Diego.

Their first morning at sea dawned with high spirits, as they passed Gálvez on the tiny *Concepción*, greeting him with shouts and a salute from all six cannons. Late that afternoon, still sailing in tandem with

Map courtesy of Karina Busto and Manuel Oseguera, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur, Mexico.

The reconstructions of the *San Carlos* accompanying this article have never been published. There are several small differences between these drawings by Raymond Aker and our cover, which he painted circa 1975. The most noteworthy revisions are gangways, topped by iron stanchions with rope netting between, which link the quarterdeck and foc'sl, allowing sailors to pass above the crowded gun deck. Mr. Aker based his work primarily upon inventories of the ship and plans of small Spanish naval vessels of the period.

Courtesy Raymond Aker.



Soldiers and sailors endured seemingly endless trips for water in a launch like this. This conjectural reconstruction of a twenty-one foot craft is based on inventories of the *San Carlos*. The davit in her stern carried a kedge anchor, which helped save the ship from grounding.

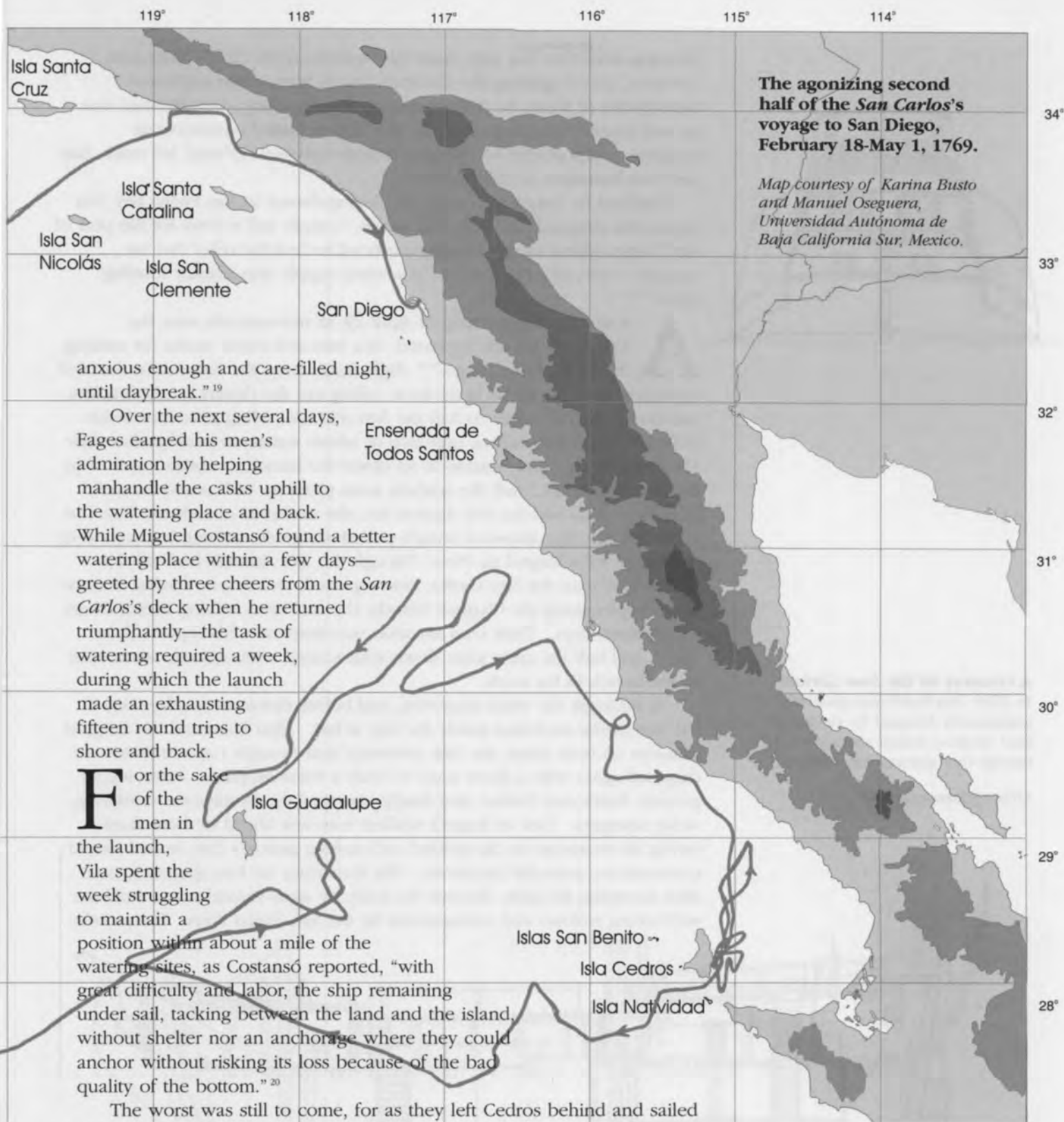
Courtesy Raymond Aker.

Concepción, the crew put on a sailing demonstration for his benefit. The strain was beginning to tell on Gálvez, however, who was en route to the Bay of San Bernabé to attempt, unsuccessfully, to repair the *San Antonio* in time to sail north with the *San Carlos* as planned. Soon, Gálvez was insisting that he had seen Russians in Baja California with his own eyes; unhinged perhaps by the stress of the still-uncertain outcome of his Alta California gamble and by the war in Sonora, within the year he was claiming to receive messages from Saint Francis, and believed himself to be by turns the kings of Prussia and Sweden, and God Himself. Astonishingly, he would recover and rise to still more exalted heights in the King's service.¹³

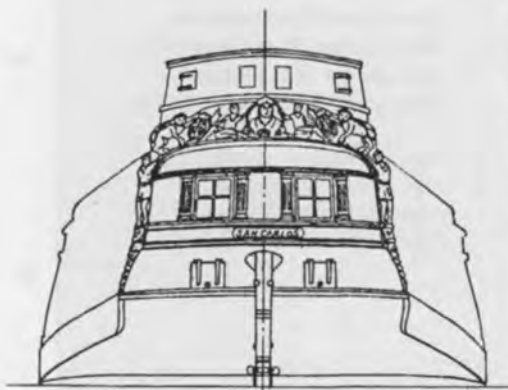
Anchoring in the bay of San Bernabé on January 14, Vila paid Gálvez a last call aboard *Concepción*. After spending a day topping off his water casks—crucial for a voyage along a desert coast—he put to sea again. On January 22, he heard news “which caused me some anxiety” from the ship’s caulker, who reported three and one-half inches of water in the pump.¹⁴ Before dawn the next day, the seas had grown so rough that the barely-controllable tiller broke his helmsman’s leg; hours later, in conditions “which tormented us greatly with the strong pitching that it caused the *paquebot*,” Vila learned that the water was coming from damaged casks. Though he insisted that the 150 casks had been properly stowed, during the next week of huge waves—one of which snapped the tiller at its socket—his log records the dwindling water supply.¹⁵

On February 1, the seas lessened, and *San Carlos* altered course to the north after sailing almost due west as ordered.¹⁶ After passing waterless Guadalupe Island two weeks later, the crew sighted mainland Baja California on February 18. As they neared it the following day, in fog and extreme cold, Vila saw his first kelp, “a kind of leek or sea onion of considerable size, with stems two fathoms long.” That day, *San Carlos* reached a position a mere 125 miles south of San Diego. The water situation, however, was critical; in every four casks, they later reported, not enough remained to fill one. Vila turned south, hoping to replenish at one of the few watering places reported by previous explorers.¹⁷

On March 4, they anchored near shore, where they saw several Indians, the first fellow humans they had encountered for over a month. In a sudden gust of wind, however, the anchors dragged, forcing Vila to cut one and continue south.¹⁸ Five days later at Cedros Island, where he knew that Sebastian Vizcaíno, the last Spanish visitor, had found water 167 years before, Vila lowered the launch and sent Lieutenant Pedro Fages and several armed soldiers ashore. Finding only a trickle of water about half a mile inland, they dammed it and returned to the ship, and in the afternoon, Fages brought the other officers and surgeon Pedro Prat to the site; all decided that the brackish water was drinkable. Their ship, however, was in peril of running aground. As the *San Carlos* dragged her anchor on the sandy bottom and edged toward shore, Vila was forced to kedge—a laborious maneuver in which the launch hauled one of the ship’s anchors a distance to seaward, while sailors on the ship heaved around the capstan to pull her clear of danger. The shallow nine-foot draft, which probably impeded her sailing qualities, no doubt helped save her. While Fages and his soldiers slept on the island, presumably grateful to be ashore, Vila confessed to having “passed an



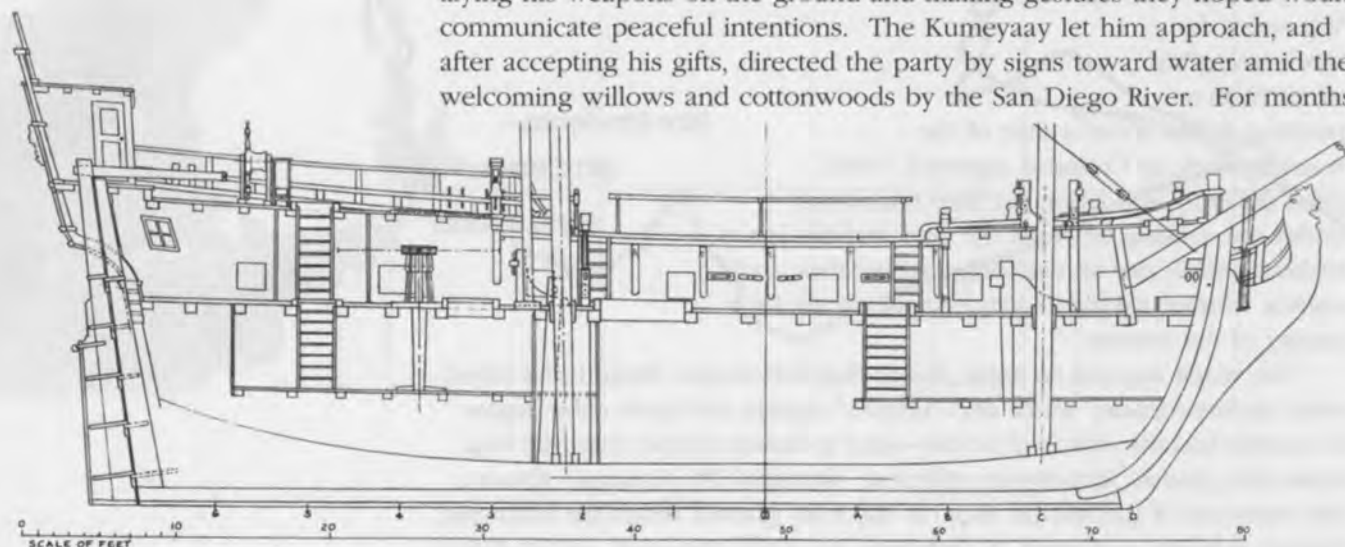
The worst was still to come, for as they left Cedros behind and sailed west against contrary winds and currents, captain and crew alike began to acutely feel the effects of scurvy—and to sicken further from the bad water they had so laboriously collected. On April 19, Fernando Alvarez, the coxswain of the launch, died, as did Pilot Manuel Reyes the following Sunday evening. On April 24, however, an island appeared, and at dawn the next day Vila found himself between four islands and the mainland, whose distant snowcapped heights reminded him of mountains near



A cutaway of the *San Carlos*.

In 1769, her hold was probably temporarily bridged by decking (not shown) which supported her twenty-five unfortunate soldiers.

Courtesy Raymond Aker.



Granada which he had seen from the Mediterranean. If his heart sank, however, on recognizing the Channel Islands from earlier explorers' descriptions of them, he did not confess it in his diary; they signified that he had missed San Diego entirely. His orders, based on inaccurate accounts which placed San Diego's latitude between 33° and 34° north, had sent him hundreds of miles astray.²¹

Buffeted by very rough seas, the ship anchored in San Pedro Bay, but the anchor dragged. Instead, Vila wrote, "I made sail to look for the port of San Diego, where we confidently expected to find the relief that we needed—especially the sick—as our water supply was already running short."²²

At nine on the morning of April 29, in now-smooth seas, the Coronado Islands appeared, "the best and surest marks for making the port of San Diego."²³ Eight hours later, the *San Carlos* doubled Point Loma, with a sailor in the bow calling out the depths on the leadline, and broke out her colors to hail the *San Antonio*, riding at anchor inside Ballast Point. Vila's sailors, only two of whom remained healthy after their 110-day voyage, were "unable to let down the launch to obtain water or to do any other work;" half the soldiers were prostrate with scurvy as well.²⁴ With little wind and the tide against her, she anchored outside the bay, but after dark the *San Antonio's* launch pulled alongside carrying her second-in-command, Pilot Miguel de Pino. Though the *San Antonio* had sailed a month later than the *San Carlos*, Pino reported, and despite having become disoriented among the Channel Islands, she had been waiting in San Diego for eighteen days. Their own situation was desperate: his captain, Juan Pérez, and half the crew were down with scurvy, with only the seven men in the launch fit for work.

At midnight the wind improved, and before dawn on Sunday, May 1, the *San Carlos* anchored inside the bay at last. After Mass and the firing of cannons on both ships, the *San Antonio's* boat brought Captain Pérez and departed again with a shore party to seek a watering place. From higher ground, Kumeyaay Indian men warily observed the twenty-one stumbling, sickly strangers. One of Fages's soldiers was sent ahead to them alone, laying his weapons on the ground and making gestures they hoped would communicate peaceful intentions. The Kumeyaay let him approach, and after accepting his gifts, directed the party by signs toward water amid the welcoming willows and cottonwoods by the San Diego River. For months,

Alta California's desperately ill occupying force would continue to depend for their survival on the Kumeyaay, accepting whatever fish and game they could obtain in trade.

Aboard *San Carlos*, Pérez told his superior, Vila, just how near the expedition had already come to failure: the *San Carlos* had appeared on the very day Pérez had chosen to abandon the port for Monterey, in the belief that Vila's ship had long since come and gone. In order to set up a tent hospital onshore, under sails brought from his ship, Vila ordered any such voyage temporarily postponed, hoping that the land expedition or the supply ship *San José* would arrive quickly. Failing that, the Andalusian captain contemplated a suicidal mission: "as a last resort I hoped to send off one of the two *paquebotes* with four or six men (though it seemed foolhardy to think of) to San Blas...to inform them of our sad condition and to beg these authorities to send us the necessary supplies without sparing time."²⁵ The eagerly awaited *San José*, however, would never come. After being delayed by her own water difficulties, she was lost with all hands somewhere off the Baja California coast.

Two weeks after *San Carlos* anchored in San Diego Bay, the first of the two desert-weary parties sent overland by Gálvez hove into view:

From a little height on this plain...we caught sight of the ships' mainmasts, scarcely visible because of our distance from them. I do not know how to tell the happiness and joy we all felt at seeing the hour arrive of our reaching the wished-for harbor of San Diego, or at seeing in it His Majesty's packetboats the *San Carlos* and the *San Antonio*.²⁶

Though the elated writer, Father Juan Crespi, joyously scrawled SAN DIEGO in giant letters in his diary, he was sobered by the scene he encountered, writing one month later that "few of them can keep on their feet. Only by a miracle will most of them be able to escape with their lives."²⁷ Vila's diary records the accelerating deaths of his men—first one Filipino sailor, then his cabin boy, then another Filipino. "Every day, two or three of them died," wrote Costansó. When Father Serra arrived by land in June, he was shocked at the condition of the men he had blessed in January: "the *San Carlos* is without sailors, for all have died of scurvy, save one and a cook."²⁸ By the expedition's end, death would claim fifty-one of the sea party.

Though for a year they all feared that the abandonment of San Diego was likely, the survivors held on and recovered. In July, Vila ordered the *San Antonio* south to San Blas with a skeleton crew to bring help; postponing her mission to Monterey until their survival was secure. The dearth of sailors trapped Vila and the *San Carlos* in San Diego Bay for one and a half years before he could sail her back to San Blas; days after his arrival there, he too was dead. The *San Carlos* herself would return to California—though never again under such grueling circumstances—and in 1775 became the first ship to enter San Francisco Bay. The legacy which the *San Carlos* left behind in Southern California, however, was equally significant. On the day in 1769 when the Kumeyaay watched Vila's men construct their makeshift hospital to shelter men of European, Mexican, African and Filipino descent, San Diego was born as a multi-ethnic community.

A survivor recalls arriving in San Diego in 1769:

We "entered the port of San Diego 110 days after leaving La Paz: but the crew, and the troops aboard—whose fatigue, in so extended and painful a voyage, and in the rawest of winter, could not be less than excessive—arrived in a deplorable state. Scurvy had strongly infected all without exception; upon entering San Diego two men were dead of the sickness, and most of the seamen and half the soldiers found themselves prostrate in their beds; only four sailors remained on foot and rallied, helped by the soldiers, to trim and furl the sails and perform other manual tasks."

—Military Engineer Miguel Costansó, 1770.

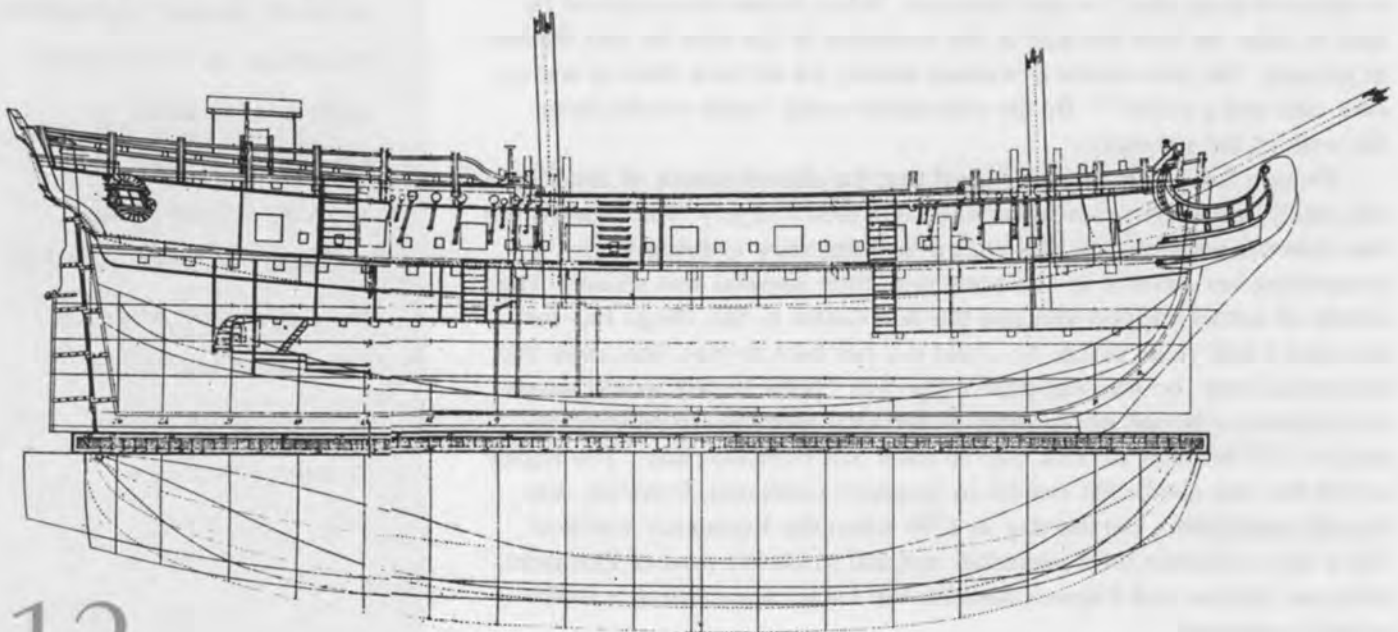
N O T E S

- 1 Francisco Bodega y Quadra, Journal, 1792, MS HM141, Huntington Library, San Marino.
- 2 See Herbert I. Priestly, *José de Gálvez, Visitor-General of New Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1916).
- 3 See Donald C. Cutter, "Plans for the Occupation of Upper California. A New Look at the 'Dark Age' from 1602-1769," *Journal of San Diego History* 24 no. 1 (Winter 1978): 78-90.
- 4 Miguel Costansó, *Diario Histórico De Los Viajes De Mar, Y Tierra Hechos Al Norte De La California De Orden Del Excelentísimo Señor Marques De Croix, Virrey, Governador, Y Capitan General De La Nueva España: Y Por Direccion Del Illustrísimo Señor D. Joseph De Galvez, Del Consejo, y Camara de S.M. en el Supremo de Indias, Intendente de Exercito, Visitador General de este Reyno.* (Mexico City: Imprenta del Superior Gobierno, 1770). This and all other quotations from Costansó are author's translations.
- 5 *Toison de Oro* refers to the Order of the Golden Fleece, Spain's highest award for military merit, created after the 1571 Battle of Lepanto. Dimensions were calculated by Raymond Aker based on information contained in inventories of the ship, made in 1769, 1777, and 1778. These and other research enabled Mr. Aker to create the reconstructions of *San Carlos* which accompany this article. From inventories we learn such trivia as that her binnacle lamps were silver, and her cabin held a pair of commodores. The only detail which betrays her Mexican origin is a cable woven of agave fiber. See also Anonymous, "Maritime Detective Work: How *San Carlos* was Given Form and Substance After 200 Years," *Sea Letter* (Summer 1975): n.p.
- 6 The area was rich in timber, prompting even visitors from Spain otherwise unimpressed by frontier conditions to extol "the excellence of San Blas timber for marine construction." Antonio de Pineda, an officer on Malaspina's Expedition, in Michael E. Thurman, *The Naval Department of San Blas* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark, 1967), 39.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 69.
- 8 Juan Manuel de Viniegra, in *Ibid.*, 69.
- 9 Costansó, 14-15.
- 10 Viniegra, in Thurman, 70.
- 11 The composition of her 1769 crew is suggested by her 1778 complement of 30: a captain, mate, chaplain, second surgeon, bosun, bosun's mate, "practical" pilot, carpenter, caulker, coxswain, bloodletter, steward, cook, seven gunners, eight sailors, a grommet and a page. "Inventario del Paquebot...San Carlos," March 1778, Californias, vol. 8, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter cited as AGN), Mexico City.

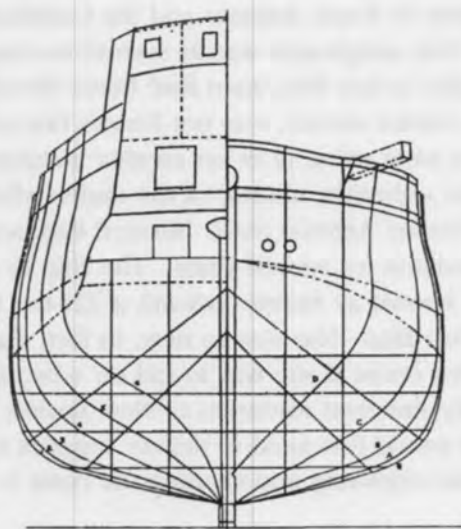
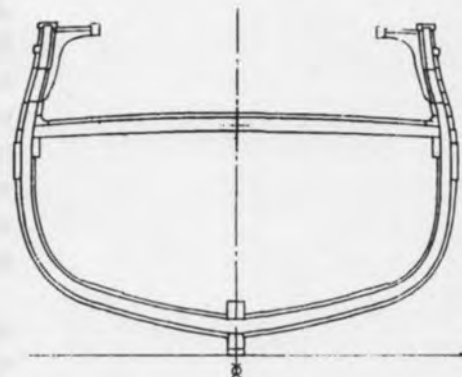
A late-eighteenth-century Spanish drawing of a "pacabote" of eighteen guns.

Though much larger than the *San Carlos*, she shows what a Spanish packet was like.

Courtesy Museo Naval, Madrid.



- 12 According to her manifest, the *San Carlos* was also laden with 3,800 gallons of water, 4,676 lbs. of dried beef, 1,783 lbs. of dried fish, 6,678 lbs. of hardtack, 690 lbs. of white bread, 450 lbs. of cheese, 300 lbs. of chili pepper, 125 lbs. of garlic, 17 bushels of salt, 5 jars of brandy and 6 of Baja California wine, sugar, flour, lard, corn, rice, garbanzos, beans, bran, lentils, vinegar, figs, raisins, dates, chocolate, hams, smoked beef tongues, oil and spices. Room had to also be found for agricultural implements, 5 tons of wood, 16 sacks of coal, and 112 pounds of candles. Owen Coy, "The San Carlos, Mayflower of the West," *California Historian* 22 no. 1 (1975): 6. Her 1769 complement is numbered in "Inventario del Paquebot...San Carlos," February 1769(?), Provincias Internas, AGN.
- 13 Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale, 1973), 53.
- 14 Vicente Vila, "Diario de Navegación del Paquebot de S.M. Nombrado El San Carlos Alias El Toyson..." in Robert Selden Rose, Ed., "The Portola Expedition of 1769-1770: Diary of Vicente Vila," *Publications of the Academy of Pacific Coast History* 2, no. 1 (Berkeley: University of California, 1911), 12. This and all other quotations from Vila are author's translations. No comparable document survives which records the course of the *San Antonio*.
- 15 Ibid., 14. The injured seaman was Agustín Medina. The number of casks is in "Inventario del Paquebot...San Carlos," February 1769 (?), Provincias Internas, AGN.
- 16 "Gálvez had given strict orders to Captain Vila as also to the other captain to sail out into the ocean and proceed as far as latitude thirty-four degrees and then to cruise in search of said port..." Fr. Junípero Serra to Fr. Francisco Palóu, 3 July 1769, in Fr. Zephyrin Englehardt, *San Diego Mission* (San Francisco: James H. Barry Company, 1920), 18. See also Costansó, 17.
- 17 Serra to Palóu, 18.
- 18 Near Punta San Antonio.
- 19 Vila, 45.
- 20 Costansó, 17-18.
- 21 Serra to Palóu, 18. San Diego's actual latitude is 32° 42' north.
- 22 Vila, 87.
- 23 Ibid., 89.
- 24 Serra to Palóu, 19.
- 25 Vila, 95.
- 26 Fr. Juan Crespi in Richard F. Pourade, *The Call to California* (San Diego: Copley Books, 1968), 87.
- 27 Fr. Juan Crespi to the Fr. Guardian of the Colegio de San Fernando, 22 June 1769, in Englehardt, 15.
- 28 Serra to Palóu: 18. Vila records that the dead Filipino sailors were Agustín Fernandez de Medina and Matteo Francisco, and the cabin boy was Manuel Sanchez.



Courtesy Raymond Aker.



Esteban José Martínez:

A Naval Officer who Steered Spain
to the Edge of War
in the Pacific Northwest

By Vivian C. Fisher

Esteban José Martínez was an important figure in eighteenth century Spanish voyages along the Pacific coast. His career in the New World began with a voyage that stretched Spain's slender frontier resources to fulfill two barely compatible aims: the delivery of supplies to the young settlements of Alta California and a mission of exploration. Likewise, the unique demands of service at the edge of the empire stretched Martínez himself beyond his usual task of piloting supply ships into an unaccustomed role as the protector of Spain's interests who, in a single incident, catapulted his nation into an international crisis.¹

The Spanish-born, thirty-one-year-old officer arrived in San Blas, on the west coast of Mexico, late in 1773. He was newly appointed to the Naval Department there, which served the functions of naval yard, supply base for the missions and presidios of Baja and Alta California, and departure point for explorations farther north. A pilot by training, he had sailed from Spain to South America and the Caribbean since 1758.

Martínez's first assignment was as second-in-command to the most experienced pilot in San Blas, Juan José Pérez Hernández. Martínez, untried in the coastal service, was not Pérez's first or even second choice; his preferences were either ill or on another assignment, both common problems in the unhealthy climate of the understaffed naval base. In Mexico City, Viceroy Antonio María Bucareli had been planning an exploring expedition for several years. The ship to be used was the *Santiago* (also known as *Nueva Galicia*), a 225-ton frigate newly completed in San Blas. She was so new, in fact, that there was no time for a shakedown cruise if she was to sail on schedule in January 1774. Given the thinly-stretched resources of New Spain's far north, however, the expedition would first need to deliver supplies to the Alta California presidios, before exploring and charting the coast to 60° north as Bucareli had ordered.²

The voyage, from Bucareli's point of view, was unsuccessful. Problems dogged the *Santiago* within days: she listed badly, taking in water through her gunports; her rudder was not properly constructed; and both masts lacked trestle-trees. Pérez and Martínez called at San Diego for repairs, where they disembarked supplies and eleven of the twenty-three settlers. Among them was Fray Junípero Serra, the sixty-year-old father-president of Alta California's five missions, who was returning from Mexico City, where he had successfully petitioned the viceroy for changes in the government of the new settlements and for more funds for his missions.³

The *Santiago* anchored in Monterey to unload her remaining passengers and supplies and make further rudder repairs, and then proceeded northward into waters unknown to Spain. They did not reach 60° north as Bucareli had ordered, though they succeeded in reaching a latitude of 55° 48', anchoring for a few days just south of Nootka Sound, on what would later be named Vancouver Island. Here the officers and crew traded for sea otter pelts brought by the area's native people, who came out to the ship in twenty-two canoes. Martínez commented in his diary that, "The Indians wear hats but they are of straw like those in the Santa Barbara Channel. I saw a ladle made of wood and collected two elegant arrows although they are not like others used in New Spain."⁴ They did not go ashore to take formal possession for the crown at any time, however, because Pérez feared that the big frigate might be damaged if he brought her too close to unknown shores. The explorers then turned back south. En route, they considered reconnoitering San Francisco Bay, previously seen by the Spanish only from the land, but the rigors of the long, cold voyage had left the crew in bad condition, and Pérez thought it best to call at Monterey instead and allow them to recuperate.

Martínez was aboard none of the three ships sent north in 1775 to deliver supplies and continue the northern explorations, because his superiors decided that he needed more experience.⁵ He was assigned instead to assist Ship's Lieutenant Fernando Bernardo Quirós y Miranda on the *San Antonio* (also known as *El Príncipe*) to make the annual delivery to San Diego. In 1776 and 1777 Martínez carried supplies to Loreto, Baja California, in command of the *San Antonio*. In the latter year he was caught by a storm and forced to limp into Guaymas, a port north of San Blas, for repairs. This incident may have caused his superiors to question his competence, because 1778 found him second in command again, this time to First Pilot José Camacho y Brenes on the *San Carlos* (also known as *El Toisón de Oro*), on the familiar supply voyage to San Diego.

The year 1779 was one of great maritime activity along the Pacific coast of North America. Spanish officials, aware of the voyage around the world made by Captain James Cook the previous year, urgently needed to know whether Cook had left behind a settlement north of San Francisco, for no Spanish ship had sailed that far north since 1775. In the new climate of urgency, the previous practice of having vessels of exploration double as supply ships was dropped. Too

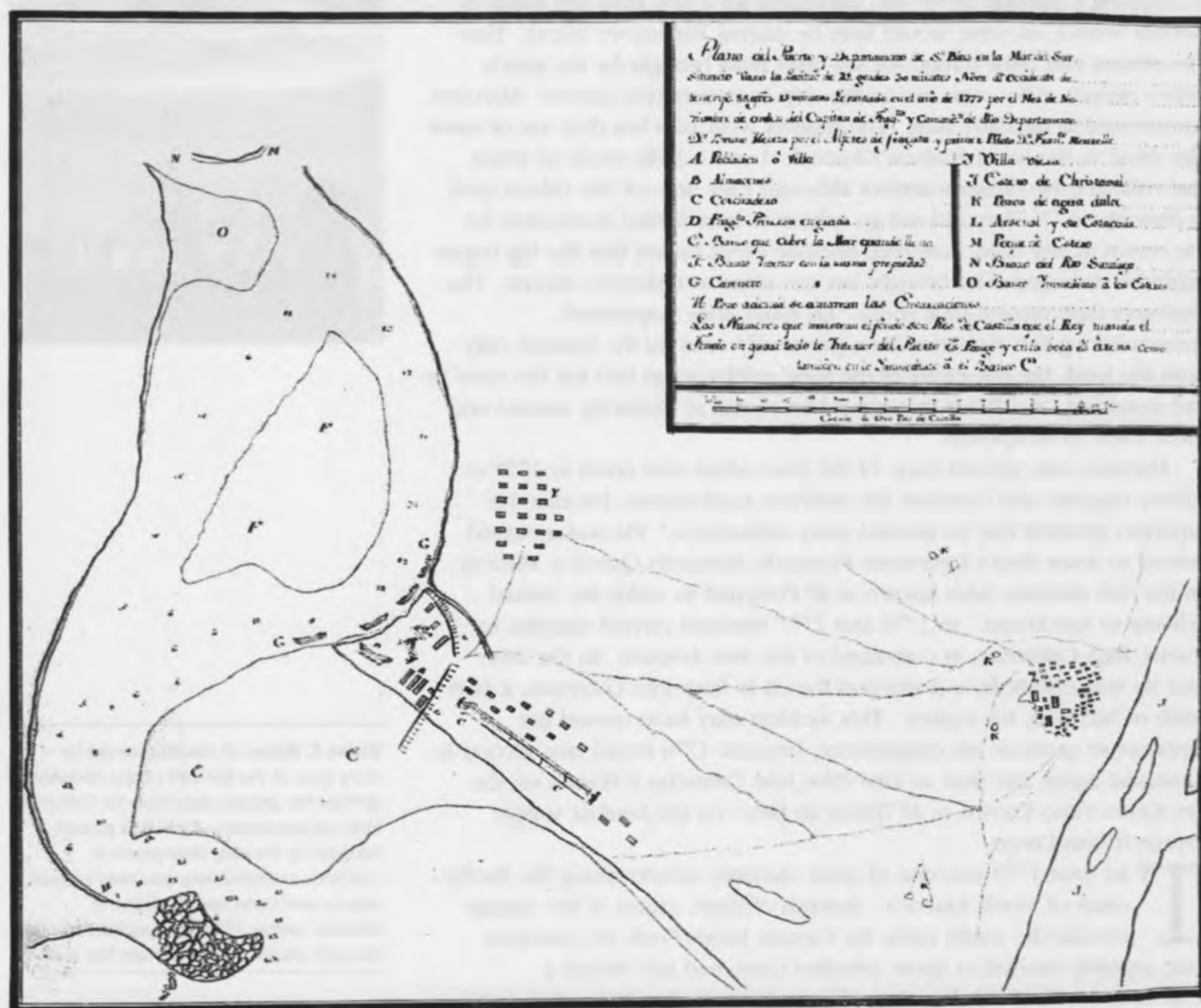


Vivian C. Fisher, of Oakland, served for many years at the Bancroft Library, Berkeley—perhaps the greatest depository for California historical documents. If you find yourself intrigued by the early descriptions of California excerpted here, you need not wait long to read more; her translation of Martínez's entire 1779 diary, published by the Bancroft, should be available late this year.

The rocky point at bottom left is the same one which appears in the photo on pages 2-3. This map of San Blas was drawn by Francisco Mourelle, himself a distinguished Pacific explorer..

Courtesy Museo Naval, Madrid.

much precious good weather had been lost to unloading goods for the settlements. The largest ship in San Blas, the *Santiago*, was chosen to carry supplies to Alta California, where there were now three *presidios*, eight missions and the town of San Jose, which needed everything from corn and beans to shotguns and shoe leather.. Although waiting for the annual supply ship would always be a necessary part of life in Spanish California, as the missions and presidios became more self-sufficient, the cargoes gradually shifted from necessities like grains and meats to luxury goods. First Pilot Esteban José Martínez was named captain. Although he had never been to the Bay of San Francisco, whose mission and presidio were not yet three years old, he knew Monterey and San Diego well.⁶



He painstakingly recorded the *Santiago's* 1779 voyage in a diary, which served the dual functions of a sailing log and an official report. It is a remarkable record of the travails involved in a typical California coastal voyage in the late eighteenth century, filled with details to aid future mariners, giving advice, for example, about the best course to chart in different seasons. While viceregal orders required all captains to keep diaries, Martínez was more thorough than most. He interspersed comments and complaints against San Blas

officials, recorded problems with his ship and crew, and described the topography and the marine life he saw, relating it to similar species he had seen on his voyages out of Spain. No doubt writing these running commentaries helped relieve the monotony of the ten-week voyage.

Various delays kept him in San Blas until the tenth of April. Because it was so late in the season, he was forced to sail south as well as west, battling the northerly winds and making as many as six changes of heading an hour in order to struggle north. Martínez sailed first to San Francisco and quickly completed unloading, despite the fact that cargo had first to be laboriously transferred to shore aboard the launch and small boat which *Santiago* carried, because the Californias lacked wharves.⁷ From the shore, the small vessels returned with barrels of fresh water, firewood, and ballast for the next leg of the voyage, all of which had to be stowed carefully to keep the ship in trim. While at sea, his men worked seven days a week, but in port they were given time off on Sundays and other holy days.

His departure for Monterey was difficult, because it required fifteen days of waiting for a break in the prevailing west wind to leave the bay. After a three-day voyage south, Martínez described Alta California's capital on the seventeenth of August:

The Presidio of San Carlos of Monterey is located on a plain close to the anchorage about three musket shots away. Its construction is in a square of 120 *varas* [330 feet; a *vara* equals thirty-three inches] and with four bastions. In them there are only two cannons in the part that looks onto the beach. Its walls are a little more than three *varas* in height and one and one-half thick. ...They have more than two hundred head of cattle, goats, and sheep, and the cows exceed more than five hundred, with some herds of mares. They have enough mules although they always need more for the use of the troops.⁸

The work at Monterey required longer than anticipated because Governor Felipe de Neve ordered him to load some pine logs cut for new construction at San Diego. Once again, he found himself at the mercy of the wind, the lack of which delayed him a further twelve days. While waiting, he described the difficulties in sailing from Monterey:



The presidio of Monterey, about fifteen years after Martínez visited it.

From the anchorage it is necessary to be on the warp and...to hope for the wind in order to put oneself along the coast of the Point of Año Nuevo. And the most scarce must be the west-southwest or southwest winds in order to go to anchor at the point to the east of Año Nuevo and there to wait for the northwest wind in order to set sail. I have never anchored there, but my companions have done it a few times.⁹

Taking care not to entangle his anchors in the bay's kelp, Martínez was forced to sail north and west to find a wind to take him south.

Martínez had encountered fog almost continuously since his approach to San Francisco in mid-June. It was now the end of August, and the fog blotted out all but the briefest glimpse of the Santa Lucia range, which reassured him that he was on course. Not wanting to risk having to weave his way between the Channel Islands, he planned to sail through the Santa Barbara Channel by using a rock near San Miguel Island as a visual marker to keep him between the mainland and the islands.¹⁰ When he awakened from an afternoon nap, however, he was alarmed to find that "the yaws of the helmsman were taking me close between Santa Cruz and San Miguel Islands."¹¹ He ordered the heading changed to northeast to take him closer to the mainland and succeeded in clearing the channel. For the benefit of future mariners, he recommended keeping equidistant between the mainland and San Miguel and Santa Cruz Islands as the safest course.

That hazard past, he began looking for the distinctive outlines of Santa Catalina Island and San Pedro Bay, noting that this channel should be followed until Point Loma was sighted. He warned mariners to avoid the shallow bay that the Spanish named False Port (modern Mission Bay), because nearby landforms looked similar to Point Loma, and False Port offered no anchorage but a sandy bank.

The *Santiago* anchored in San Diego Bay on the tenth of September. During the voyage Martínez had very little time to visit the missions, though he noted some information about their herds and harvests, which were growing steadily. After mentioning the presidio, Martínez described San Diego's mission, which had been rebuilt after it was destroyed in an uprising four years before. The mission, he wrote,

is two leagues to the east of the presidio above a slope on the banks of the same river. It is moderately poor because it can scarcely maintain the necessities and servants to guard the cattle for the lack of harvests. It is well constructed of buildings in a fortified square and [is therefore] free of incursions by heathens. It has 185 more beasts, 700 head of smaller cattle, some mares and colts, and also mules. The land sown with seed produces less than sixteen *fanegas* of wheat, six of barley, and two of corn, which have been lost all the years except this one when they raised more than 450 *fanegas* of wheat and barley.¹² Of corn, the production is not known because of its not having been harvested as of today. It has 730 Christians from different villages.¹³

The *Santiago* spent almost a month anchored in San Diego because of a shortage of mules to haul her cargo, and because of the difficulty in unloading the timber from Monterey. Work was

barely completed when Martínez received orders from San Blas to return as quickly as possible because of the threat of war with England. The inadequately armed and manned *Santiago* would not be likely to outrun or outmaneuver another ship.

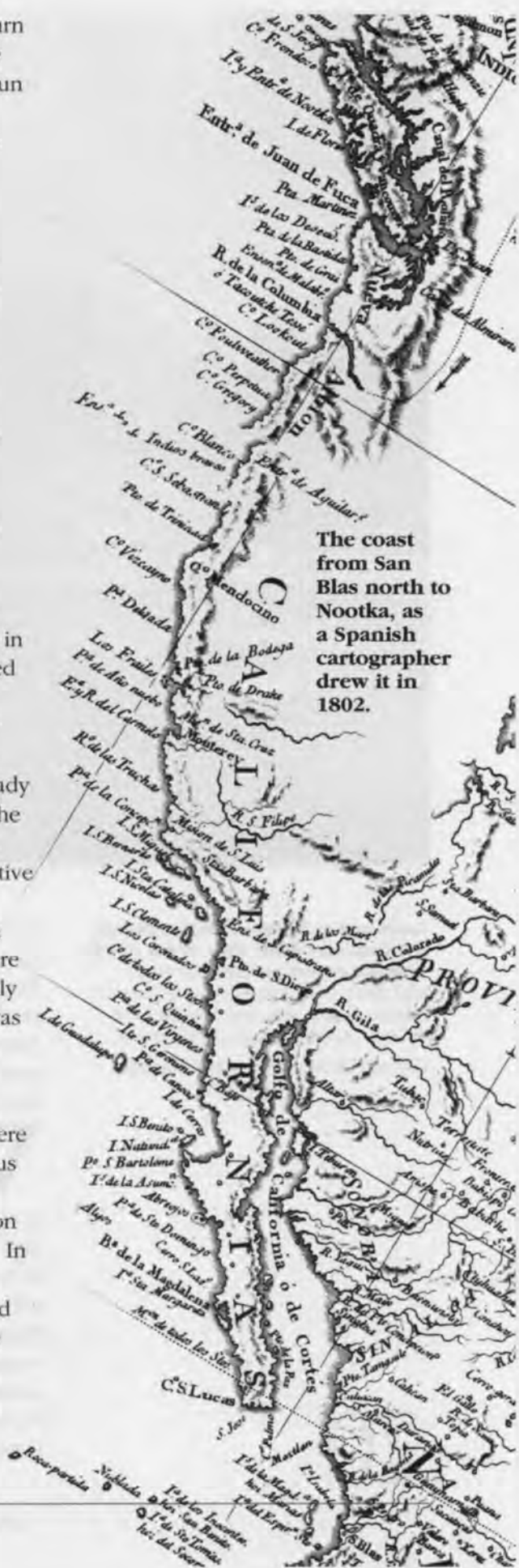
Not wanting to wait for the wind, the resourceful captain used his launch to tow the frigate out of San Diego Bay. He followed the familiar Baja California coastline south without incident, though warning of the hazards of being pulled by currents into the Gulf of California at Cabo San Lucas, it being almost impossible to get out if embayed at that time of year. He finally anchored at San Blas on the twenty-sixth of October, more than six and one-half months after his departure.

Martínez continued to carry supplies to Alta California, making voyages in 1780, 1782-1783, and 1785-1786. His assignment in 1782 included delivering supplies to the new presidio of Santa Barbara and finding the best anchorage there, while his junior officers further reconnoitered and charted the channel. His reputation with his superiors had clearly risen, because the 1782, 1783, and 1786 voyages each involved two ships under his command.

In 1786, events conspired to push Martínez toward the world spotlight. Aboard his flagship, his conversations with Vicente Vasadre y Vega, a Mexican merchant licensed to organize a trade in marine mammal pelts to be exchanged in China for quicksilver, sparked his interest in the fur trade. While his two ships rode at anchor in Monterey, they were joined by a pair of French ships, commanded by the Comte de La Pérouse, on a voyage around the world. They had recently stopped at Concepción, Chile, Martínez learned, and had already been as far as 61° north before visiting Monterey. Martínez wrote to the viceroy, the Conde de Gálvez, with compelling news: the French had spoken to him of Russians at Unalaska engaged in trading with the native inhabitants for pelts, which were then sold in China.¹⁶

Martínez's report, as well as those from officials in Chile, and from Pedro de Normande, the Spanish ambassador to the Russian court, were causing great alarm in Madrid in early 1787.¹⁷ King Carlos III personally ordered an expedition sent north to verify the reports, and Martínez was the only available pilot with experience in far northern waters and in sufficiently good health to lead it. Almost from the moment his two ships arrived at their first destination, Prince William Sound, however, there were problems between Martínez and his junior officers, who were all relatively new to the rigors of the San Blas service. (Their rancorous interactions, which began with a disagreement over longitude on a particular day, escalated into allegations that Martínez hit and spat upon one of them, drank too much, and even caroused with the Russians.) In spite of this, the expedition found and reported on extensive Russian occupation from Twoheaded Island to Unalaska. Martínez also learned that the Russians were planning to expand south to Nootka Sound the following year.

The viceroy immediately mounted another expedition, again with





Anchored at Spain's Nootka outpost, a British merchant ship trades busily with the native people. An angry encounter here between the captain of another British ship and Martínez led the two countries to the brink of war.

Courtesy Museo de America, Madrid.

Martínez in command. He sailed from San Blas in February, 1789, scarcely two months after his return from the north, with orders to erect an outpost at Nootka as proof of Spain's claims to the region. When he arrived in Nootka Sound, however, he found English and American fur traders but no Russians. One Englishman, Captain James Colnett, arrived two months after the Spaniards and insisted on his right to be there, based on Captain James Cook's visit there in 1778. Martínez countered that Spain's right to the area was based on his own prior presence there in 1774. In the ensuing argument, Martínez arrested Colnett and impounded his ship, the *Argonaut*, which was owned by an English syndicate of fur traders. Remembering his 1786 conversations with the merchant Vasadre y Vega, the Spanish captain enlarged his thinking to encompass Spain's international interests, visualizing the

economic potential of the fur trade, particularly if England and other foreign powers were excluded. Martínez acted boldly: searching the English ship, he found enough pre-cut lumber to build an outpost and a small ship, all the proof he needed to justify keeping Colnett a prisoner. Along with the *Argonaut*, he impounded two other English ships and as soon as possible sent them and their crews under guard as prizes to San Blas.¹⁶

When news of Martínez's actions reached the streets of London in late 1789, a public outcry erupted, heightened by merchants who sought to break Spain's monopoly on Pacific trade and pressured Prime Minister William Pitt to act. The result was an international crisis, escalating from English protests at the Spanish court to rumors and threats of war, which neither power wanted or could afford. In the face of Pitt's show of belligerence and abandoned by her French ally, in the throes of revolution, Spain was compelled to compromise. The 1790 Nootka Convention provided a peaceful settlement, with both sides' honor intact, but Spain was required to give up her Nootka outpost, while in unsettled areas English ships were permitted to stop for necessary repairs, and to take on water and

firewood. Neither country was permitted to erect any permanent establishment.¹⁷

Martínez was never reprimanded, as far the records show, though he faded rapidly from the scene. The viceroy, the Conde de Revilla Gigedo, and the commandant of San Blas, Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, corresponded about the wisdom of his actions, but did not mention taking action against him. The following year, 1790, briefly saw Martínez again at Nootka Sound, but not as commandant of an expedition. He returned to Mexico on the first southbound ship, because just before the expedition sailed from San Blas, a royal order came requiring him to return to Spain as soon as he could be spared from his duties. His wife had filed a complaint that she had not seen him for eighteen years, since shortly after the birth of their daughter in 1772. Little is known about the final chapter of his career in Spain, except that he commanded a few merchant voyages. He returned to Mexico in 1796 and died there two years later, at the age of fifty-six, after serving his country ably for forty years.

Esteban José Martínez had a long and varied career as a Spanish naval officer. Between the years 1774 and 1786, he made more supply voyages to the two Californias than any other pilot, commanded two expeditions to the Pacific Northwest, and participated in two others. He was a significant figure in eighteenth century Spanish voyages along the Pacific Coast, a coastal pilot who stepped briefly but decisively into the international spotlight.

The little outpost of Santa Cruz de Nootka, under the protective guns of the fort of San Miguel, would not remain Spanish for long. The Spanish frigate *Concepción*, minus her topmasts and covered by awnings, lies at anchor below, while Tetaku, a chief from the Strait of Juan de Fuca, is paddled across for a visit.

Courtesy Museo de América, Madrid.



NOTES

- 1 This article is based on extensive research in documents concerning the need to ship supplies to the Californias and on Martínez's career in San Blas, found in archives, museums, and libraries in California, Mexico, and Spain. There is insufficient space in these few pages to list all the references. For the history of San Blas and the construction of the *Santiago*, see Michael E. Thurman, *The Naval Department of San Blas* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark, 1967).
- 2 60° north corresponds to modern Yakutat Bay, Alaska, then known as Port Mulgrave. The 1774 voyage is documented in *Historia*, vol. 61, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter cited as AGN), Mexico City. It contains the diaries of Pérez and Martínez and most of the letters concerning preparations for the voyage.
- 3 Serra then walked from San Diego to Monterey, stopping at missions along the way. He arrived in Monterey within a few days of the *Santiago*.
- 4 "Diario de Navegación de don Estevan Josef Martinez...", 1774, entry for July 20-21, *Historia*, vol. 61, AGN. This and all other quotations are author's translations.
- 5 Antonio María Bucareli to José de Gálvez, 26 June 1777, Audiencia de Guadalajara 516, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla.
- 6 The following account is based largely on "Diario de Navegacion de dn. Estevan Josef Martinez...para los tres Precidios y Misiones en...1779," The Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- 7 Martínez noted that San Francisco Bay could only be approached successfully from the north, which he stated was also the case in Monterey and San Diego.
- 8 Martínez, fols. 55r-55v.
- 9 *Ibid.*, fol. 57r.
- 10 Martínez's "cliff of Lobos" (sea lions) is known today as Richardson Rock.
- 11 *Ibid.*, fol. 61v.
- 12 A *fanega* is a measure of grain roughly equivalent to one and one-half bushels, or 120 gallons. The word also refers to the amount of land needed to sow a *fanega* of grain.
- 13 *Ranchería*, the word here translated "village," refers to a cluster of dwellings, with perhaps a community religious center. Martínez 1779, fols. 68r-68v.
- 14 Vasadre y Vega and Governor Pedro Fages also wrote reports about the French, but did not mention the Russians. Martínez to the Conde de Gálvez, 17 December 1786, *Historia*, vol. 396, fols. 213-16, AGN.
- 15 Several reports, including Pedro de Normande to Conde de Floridablanca, 29 October 1785, St. Petersburg; and Ambrosio Higgins de Vallemar to José de Gálvez, 20 July 20 1786, Concepción, Chile; Estado, leg. 4289, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid.
- 16 The American ships, also at Nootka to trade for pelts, showed no indications of intended permanence there, in Martínez's estimation.
- 17 Freeman Tovell, "Bodega y Quadra: The Foremost Spanish Naval Officer of the Pacific Northwest," *Resolution* (Spring 1996): 4-8. Viceroy Revilla Gigedo decided, with the agreement of Bodega y Quadra, that the ships and the goods on them seized by Martínez should be returned to their English owners, replaced, or reimbursed, a decision later approved by the king.

This 1758 Russian map shows unknown lands along the rim of the western Pacific, where enterprising Russians envisioned great commercial possibilities.



Planning for Discovery:

The Career of Bodega y Quadra

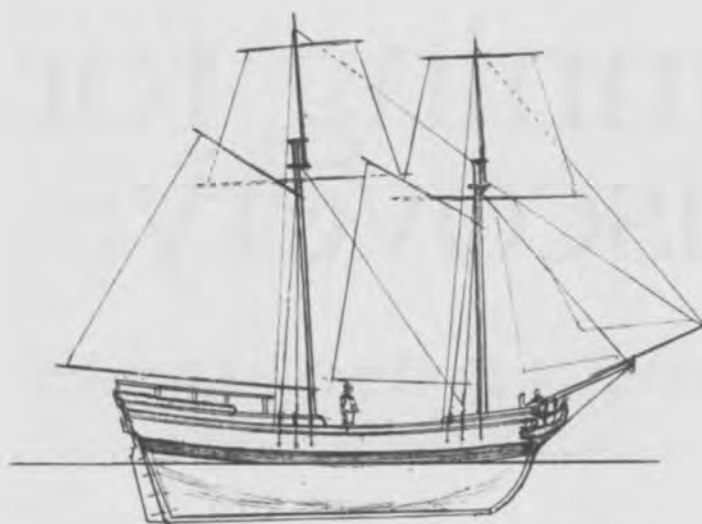
by Freeman Tovell

No images of Bodega made during his lifetime survive, though this modern medallion captures something of his intrepid spirit. It was presented by Spain to Canada to honor the launching of the Canadian coast guard ship *Bodega y Quadra*.

Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra Mollinedo, to give him his full name, was arguably the ablest of the small group of Spanish naval officers who spent much of their professional life exploring the Pacific Northwest. The progress of his career marked the end of a period of ad hoc exploration and the introduction of expeditions which relied more on rational, careful practices and sophisticated planning. His career makes this shift dramatically visible, for initially he leaped to prominence with his superiors through a rash and daring act, stretching his ship and crew beyond their limit, while his later career illustrates cautious thoughtfulness, epitomized by his transformation into the negotiator of an international dispute. Bodega's career in the Americas spanned almost the entire twenty-year period, from 1774 to 1795, when this remote corner of the world was the focus of Spanish concern.¹



Freeman Tovell lives in Victoria, British Columbia, and is the author of several articles and a forthcoming book on Bodega y Quadra. He retired after thirty-five years in Canada's diplomatic service, in which he held ambassadorships to Peru and Bolivia.



A reconstruction of the little *Sonora*—not the ideal craft in which to explore the Pacific Northwest.

Courtesy Raymond Aker.

Bodega y Quadra occupies a unique position among Spain's eighteenth century Pacific explorers. He stands midway between an able workaday coastal pilot like Esteban José Martínez, who undertook exploration in addition to his regular duties, and a truly international-minded figure like Alejandro Malaspina, whose desire to further Spain's imperial interests was melded with the spirit of the Enlightenment: scientific curiosity. Instead, Bodega y Quadra is best seen as an "organization man"—both in the sense of his ambition to rise within his chosen sphere and in the organizational skills which he brought to Pacific coastal exploration. As his interaction with the celebrated English explorer George Vancouver attests, he was

far from parochial-minded, offering extravagant hospitality and sharing geographical information with the representative of Spain's longtime nemesis. Like Malaspina, Bodega was a naval officer of the Enlightenment, what the Spanish called *La Marina Ilustrada*. Unlike him, however, Bodega was a son of the New World, compelled to achieve what he could with the limited resources available on New Spain's northern frontier. The conclusion of his career illustrates the frustrating "glass ceiling" which typically stunted the careers of Spaniards born in the Americas.² Even a man like Bodega y Quadra, possessed of extraordinary ambition, could not rise to heights he thought he deserved, for his achievements occurred on the fringes of the empire, far from the view of the Spanish court, and he lacked the close connections in Madrid on which the Spanish-born could rely. The fire of his ambition, which helps account for the seeming contradiction between the rashness he exhibited early in his career and his methodical later practice as an explorer and negotiator, was not enough to melt the ice of his creole origins.³

"The impulsiveness of two spirited youths"

Bodega y Quadra's early career dramatically epitomizes the transition from ad hoc exploratory expeditions to carefully-mounted, methodical ones. Born in 1744 in Lima, Peru, he was a *criollo*—a Spaniard born and raised abroad. His family's noble ancestry, his mother's lineage among northern Peru's landed gentry and his father's business success and position as a senior official of the Merchants' Guild ensured their son entrance to the *Real Academia de Guardias Marinas*, the naval academy in Cádiz, Spain. After graduating, he briefly saw service in the Mediterranean, but this rather routine life ended when, as one of a group of six promising young officers, he was selected for service in New Spain to take part in the program of explorations of the Pacific Northwest.

In December, 1774, he reported for duty in San Blas, in the wake of

that Naval Department's inconclusive 1774 expedition northward, in which Juan Pérez had failed to find any Russian settlements—the purpose of his voyage—or make any formal claims to possession. From his palace in Mexico City, Viceroy Antonio de Bucareli immediately ordered a second expedition. With the arrival of additional officers, Bodega among them, three ships were designated to be sent north; the 250 ton frigate *Santiago*, commanded by Lieutenant Bruno de Hezeta, the *Sonora*, a fifty-nine ton schooner under Lieutenant Juan de Ayala for inshore exploration, and the 200 ton packet boat *San Carlos* under Lieutenant Miguel Manrique, charged with making the first chart of San Francisco Bay.

The thirty-one year old junior lieutenant was disappointed when he learned he would be staying behind, and instead volunteered to serve as an extra officer on the tiny *Sonora*. They sailed from San Blas on March 16, 1775, but three days out Manrique developed signs of insanity and had to be sent back. In the reshuffling of commands, Bodega y Quadra was given the *Sonora*, a twist of fate that launched his career.

The voyage had been hastily put together, a situation that Bodega would never tolerate himself once he was in charge of expedition planning. The *Sonora* was a poor choice for exploration, only thirty-six feet long, not built for the open sea, and barely capable of three knots under full sail. She seriously delayed the expedition's progress, for at times the *Santiago* was required to take in sail in order not to lose her entirely, and on one occasion even took the little *Sonora* in tow.

The untried crew of fourteen was mostly composed of ranch hands, and only four had previously been to sea. The *Sonora* carried no surgeon nor medicines of any kind, and a minimal supply of food and water. A small deck house made a cabin of sorts for the two officers, but the crew had to sleep in the cramped storage area or sitting up on deck, exposed to the elements.

After making landfall at Trinity Head in northern California, tragedy struck just south of Cape Elizabeth, near the entrance to the Quinault River on the coast of present-day Washington, when five of Bodega's men and his boatswain were killed as they were obtaining water and wood ashore.⁴ Never again would Bodega allow himself or his men to be unprepared in their dealings with Native Americans. They continued north, with the six replaced by seamen from the *Santiago*. Off the entrance to the yet-undiscovered Strait of Juan de Fuca, Bodega y Quadra and his second in command, the twenty-four-year-old Francisco Mourelle, became convinced that Hezeta wanted to turn back because the



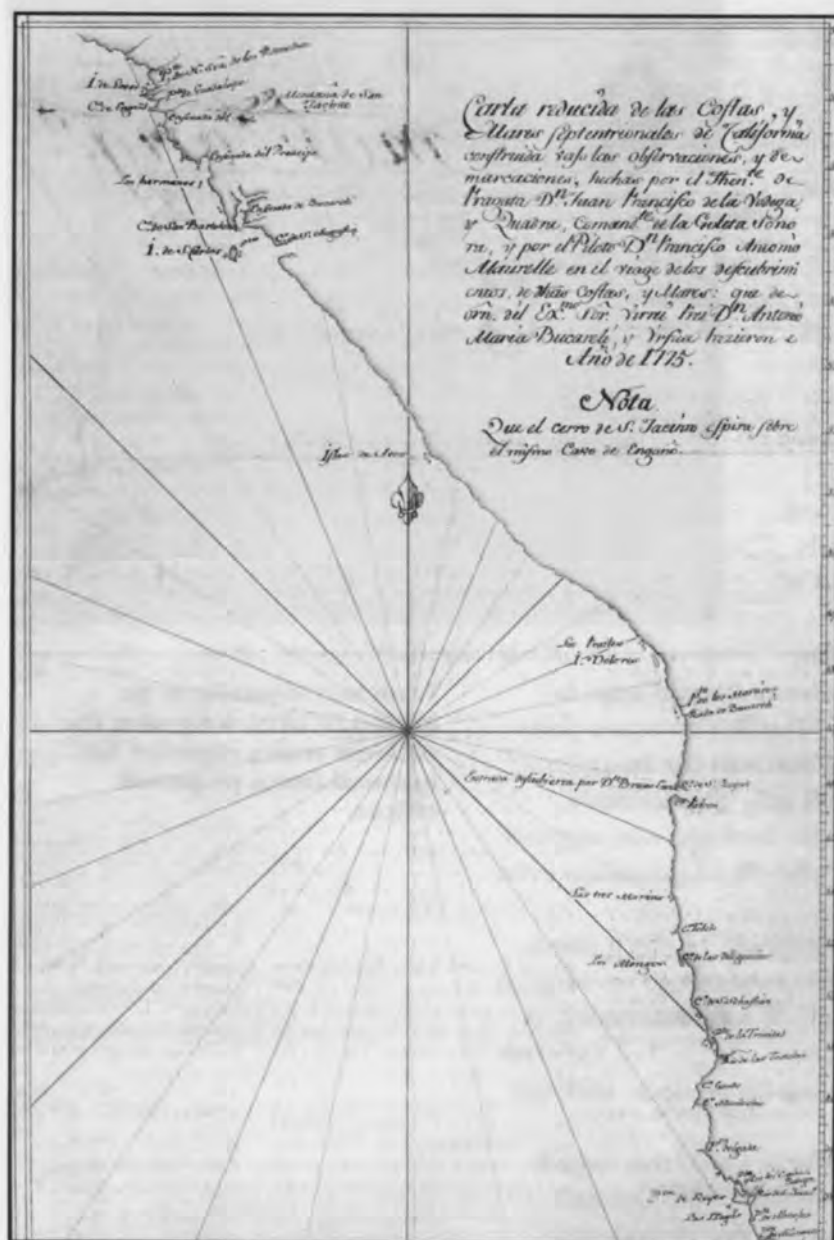
Francisco Mourelle as he looked in 1819, long after the reckless young explorer had matured into a respected officer.

Courtesy Museo Naval, Madrid.

Years later, Mourelle described their rashness as "the impulsiveness of two spirited youths." Mourelle appears to have been the plan's

The decision to "go it alone," however, was more than an act of insubordination; it was madness. Continuing north into the fierce autumn storms—in one of which an enormous wave swamped and nearly sank her—the *Sonora* managed to reach a nondescript cove near present-day Sitka, Alaska.⁶ Scurvy and the effects of exposure left the crew so stricken that only Bodega y Quadra, Mourelle and the cabin boy remained strong enough to work the ship. Though they managed to reach 58°28' north, Bodega y Quadra was defeated in his two attempts to reach 60°, the latitude specified in the expedition's instructions. Compelled to retreat southwards, Bodega entered and named vast Bucareli Bay, on the west coast of Prince of Wales Island.⁷ It was charted carefully, and the act of possession was performed, for with an eye to the future he thought its warmer climate and excellent harbours would make the bay a good jumping-off point for later explorations. Continuing south, he

When *Sonora* limped into port in Monterey, the capital of Spanish California, so weak were the two officers and the crew that all had to be carried ashore. Their voyage undeniably had epic qualities, and in his



report to Madrid, Viceroy Bucareli ignored Bodega's insubordination and praised him instead for his "heroic constancy and disregard of risks."⁸ He was rewarded with a promotion to Lieutenant, even drawing the attention of King Carlos III, who took the unusual step of ordering that both a notice and Bodega's chart be published.⁹

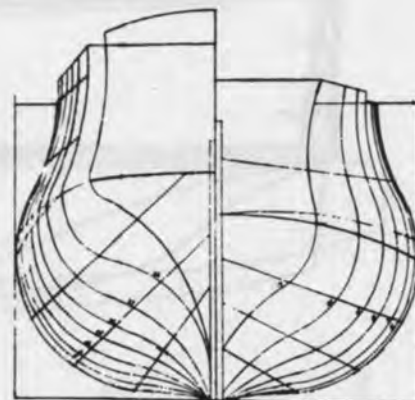
The voyage had afforded a remarkable display of seamanship and determination, not to say a harrowing experience. Though no significant discoveries had been made nor Russian settlements encountered, the consequences were important nonetheless.¹⁰ Because the expedition performed ceremonial acts formalizing their claim to possession at four locations, the Spanish empire in the Americas was extended some 1,500 miles further north.¹¹ Essential knowledge of harbours and anchorages had been obtained, as had detailed information on the native people with whom future expeditions would interact.¹²

Bodega y Quadra's dogged, methodical approach to fulfilling his mission is especially apparent in the expedition's most tangible result, the general chart of the voyage which he prepared. For the first time, a reasonably accurate indication of the direction of the coastline from San Francisco Bay to the Alaska Panhandle existed on paper, a vast region which previously had been a virtual blank on the map. To Viceroy Bucareli, the chart was especially significant, giving him and some authorities reason to seriously doubt whether any of the mythical navigable passages across North America existed.¹³ Because a number of powerful individuals in Madrid wanted absolute proof, however--especially the dynamic Minister for the Indies José de Gálvez--Spain's search for the Northwest Passage continued, with Bodega y Quadra prominently involved.

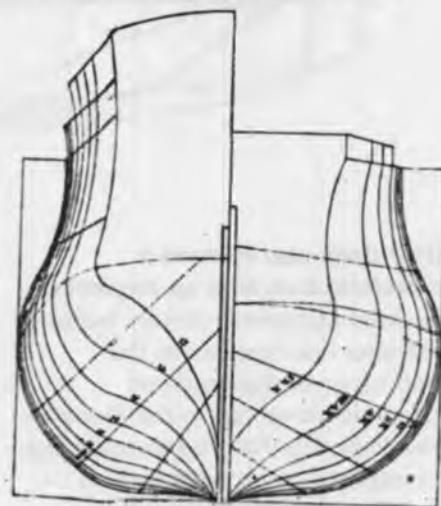
Bodega y Quadra's Second Voyage: An organizational triumph

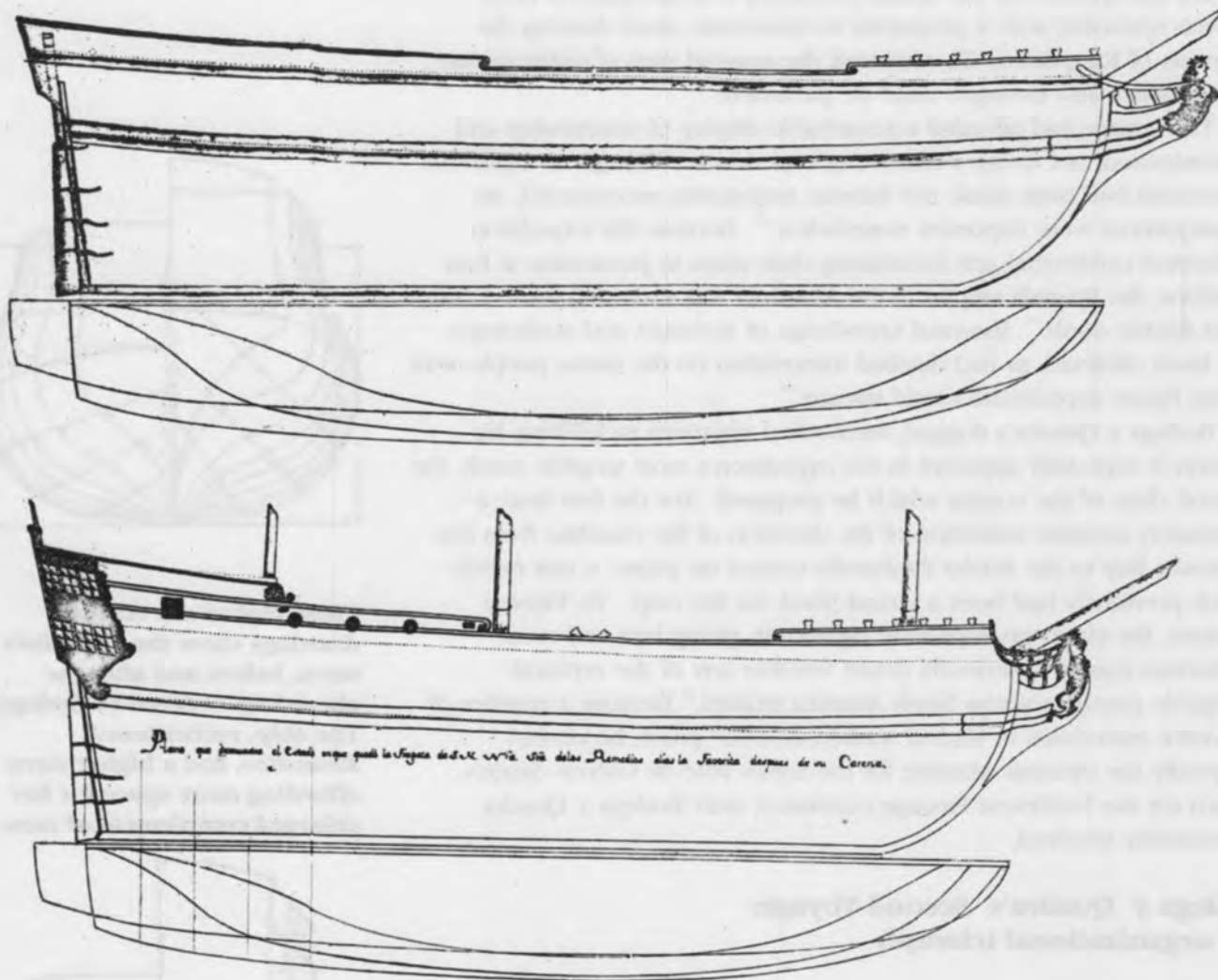
New Spain's chronic shortages of money, manpower, and especially ships delayed Bodega's second voyage for four years. While the viceroy insisted that the resupply missions to the California settlements, as yet far from self supporting, should have priority over further exploration, Minister Gálvez disagreed, citing public knowledge that James Cook would soon embark on his third voyage in search of a Pacific entrance to the Northwest Passage. Gálvez ordered the expedition to sail promptly with a twofold mission: to explore Alaskan waters as far as 65° north, and to seek and arrest Cook for trespassing in Spanish waters.¹⁴

To avoid the risks evident in sailing a lone ship into unknown northern waters, it was decided that the expedition should be carried out with two frigates. The *Princesa* was to be built in San Blas, while Bodega y Quadra was sent to Peru to purchase another, a merchant ship named the *Favorita* which he ordered converted to his specifications to make it more suitable for exploration. This voyage of exploration would be both the costliest, and the best prepared, of all the Spanish northern expeditions.¹⁵



These eighteenth century drawings show the *Favorita's* stern, before and after the alterations ordered by Bodega. The ship, rechristened *Remedios*, had a higher stern affording more space for her enlarged complement of men.





How does one convert a merchantman into an explorer?

As these eighteenth century before-and-after drawings show, the meticulous Bodega ordered extensive alterations to the Peruvian merchant ship *Favorita* to ready her for exploration—evidently even changing the female figurehead to a more suitably military lion!

The almost casual approach which had characterized the preparations of the Pérez and Hezeta-Bodega expeditions, Bodega insisted, was not to be repeated. The officers assigned to the two frigates held planning sessions, chaired by Lieutenant Ignacio Arteaga, who by virtue of seniority had been appointed by the viceroy to lead the expedition. Arteaga was a competent sailor but lacked Bodega y Quadra's boldness, perseverance, planning abilities, and perhaps his judgment, since he had just been released from three years in jail for insulting a priest.¹⁶ Together, they carefully considered lessons learned from the two previous expeditions, particularly in matters of organization, communications and logistics. Bodega and his team of pilots painstakingly researched their courses, the winds and currents to be expected, and recommended places where exploration should be concentrated.

An important key to success was the preparation of the expedition's charts. Having demonstrated on his previous voyage the unreliability of maps by prominent theoretical geographers of the day, Bodega y Quadra and his team created a large, colour-coded chart to show what was known to exist and believed to be accurate from the explorations of Russian navigators, especially Bering and Chirikov, and the published maps of more reliable cartographers, including those of the Russian Academy of Sciences. After four years of preparations and delays, the expedition set sail from San Blas on February 11, 1779, three days before Cook, the man they were ordered to apprehend if encountered, was killed in Hawaii.

Arteaga accepted Bodega's recommendation that Bucareli Bay, which lay in the same general latitude as the supposed passage of Admiral Fonte, be examined more thoroughly and a month was spent in the task. From there, the two ships continued north, performing acts of possession at Port Etches on Hinchinbrook Island at the entrance of Prince William Sound, the northernmost point ever claimed by Spanish explorers, and at Chatham Bay on Cape Elizabeth at the entrance to what is presently known as Cook inlet, where, unknown to them, Cook himself had performed the same ceremony the previous year. Also unknown to them, a Russian trading post stood nearby; a little more searching would have revealed fur traders here and elsewhere, for the Russians had a number of small settlements and trading posts in the vicinity.

Without any warning or consultation with Bodega y Quadra, however, Arteaga abruptly decided to sail back to San Blas. Because the coast here was trending southwest, there seemed no possibility of reaching 65° north as called for by instructions. Moreover, the violent storms, bitter cold, and blinding snow when it was not raining were conditions to which Mexico-based sailors were hardly accustomed, and made navigation in these treacherous waters extremely hazardous. Scurvy, too, had incapacitated many of Arteaga's men. It is evident from Bodega's none-too-discreetly-worded journal that he wished to continue exploring: "I agreed to return [to

Bodega spent many hours poring over this composite chart, part of his elaborate preparations for the 1779 expedition north with Arteaga.

Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla.



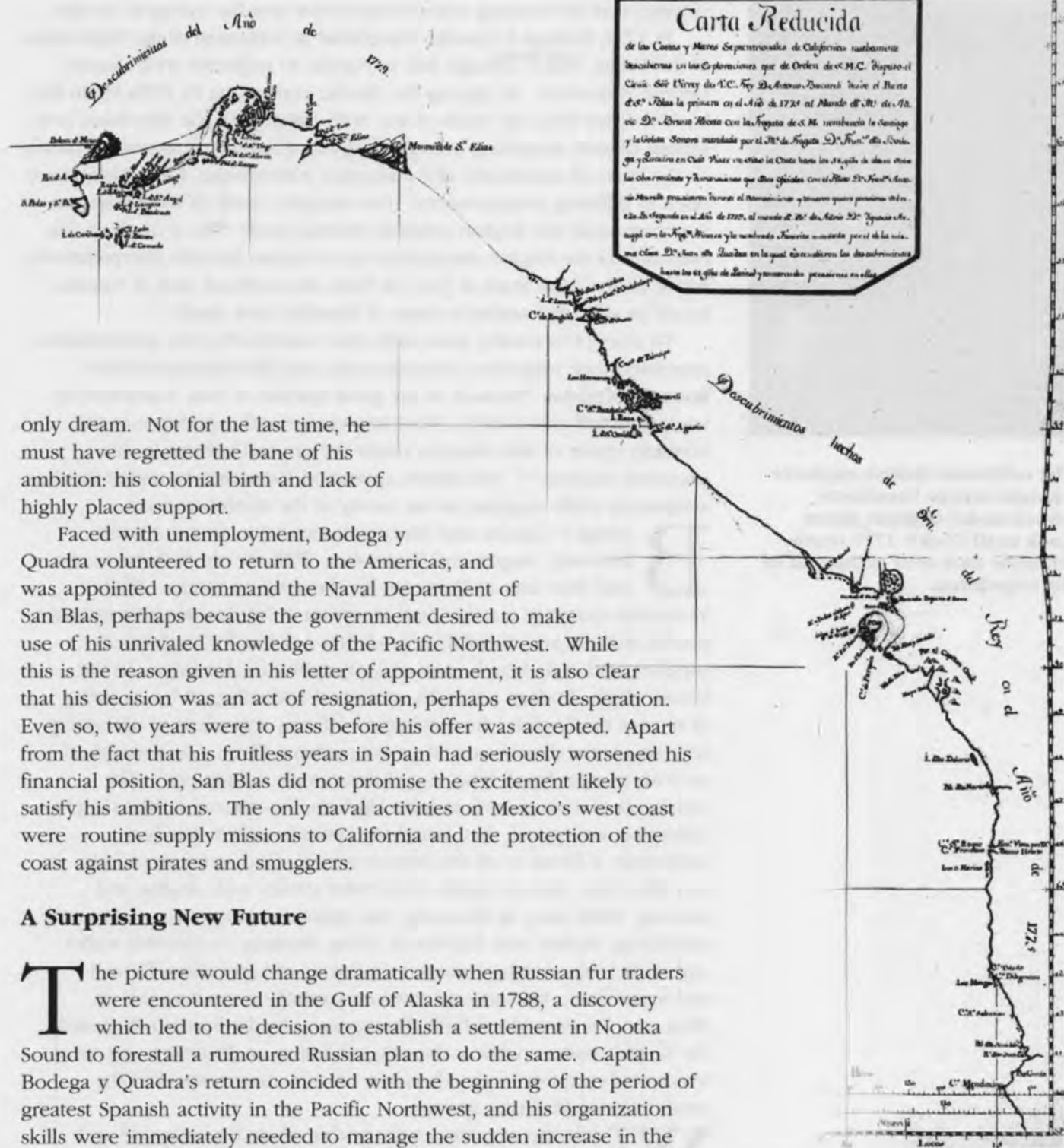
Monterey] in spite of my desire to continue our navigation," he noted, but grumbled that "I did not have the opportunity to propose any other course."¹⁷ With age, perhaps, came greater caution, but in fact he was without viable alternatives for both Arteaga and Viceroy Bucareli had placed him under strict orders to remain in company; there was to be no repetition of 1775.

The following decade saw Bodega occupied in a variety of tasks. For a year he commanded the Naval Department of San Blas, and then made a second voyage to Peru and spent a stint in Havana.¹⁸ He was in Spain from 1784 to 1789, after arranging the transfer in hopes that it would help him obtain an assignment that would lead to his advancement to flag rank. He also hoped to gain the required permission to marry the daughter of a militia colonel in Tepic. Neither quest was successful.¹⁹

Bodega's pursuit of advancement was thwarted by the doubtlessly aggravating discovery that senior naval officers, especially Antonio Valdés, the Minister of Marine responsible for all senior appointments, were quite indifferent to or unaware of his accomplishments as an explorer. Twice he made the long journey from Cádiz to the royal palace of El Escorial, outside Madrid, to seek an interview with the minister, but it is apparent that he had no friends at court to espouse his case. In addition he encountered opposition for a more subtle reason: the well known prejudice against "colonials" being given senior appointments in any branch of the services, the government or the church. Moreover, a confidential assessment made of him at this time by his superiors damns him with faint praise:

Known worth, good conduct, modest talent, has had success fulfilling his commissions, satisfactory intelligence, has exercised command and shown an aptitude for it.²⁰

While in Madrid he submitted a proposal which is characteristic of the man, demonstrating intellectual interests midway between those of a pilot like Martínez, called on to undertake exploration, and a truly international-minded figure like Alejandro Malaspina. Bodega proposed a careful charting of the entire Pacific coast from Tierra del Fuego to as far north as possible to complement concurrent Spanish efforts to develop an accurate atlas of the Iberian peninsula's coast. His proposal, however, would not have created a scientific expedition on the model of Cook and La Pérouse, whose voyages brought their countries prestige in both the scientific community as whole and among the general public. King Carlos III sought the opportunity to promote the natural and physical sciences as a means of shedding Spain's intellectual isolation, and Bodega's proposal offered negligible interest to the scientific community and would not have brought Spain the desired international acclaim. Malaspina's proposal of a more ambitious expedition embracing a number of disciplines, however, received prompt royal endorsement. It did Malaspina no harm that both he and Minister Antonio Valdés were both members of the Order of Malta, a special link the like of which Bodega y Quadra could



only dream. Not for the last time, he must have regretted the bane of his ambition: his colonial birth and lack of highly placed support.

Faced with unemployment, Bodega y Quadra volunteered to return to the Americas, and was appointed to command the Naval Department of San Blas, perhaps because the government desired to make use of his unrivaled knowledge of the Pacific Northwest. While this is the reason given in his letter of appointment, it is also clear that his decision was an act of resignation, perhaps even desperation. Even so, two years were to pass before his offer was accepted. Apart from the fact that his fruitless years in Spain had seriously worsened his financial position, San Blas did not promise the excitement likely to satisfy his ambitions. The only naval activities on Mexico's west coast were routine supply missions to California and the protection of the coast against pirates and smugglers.

A Surprising New Future

The picture would change dramatically when Russian fur traders were encountered in the Gulf of Alaska in 1788, a discovery which led to the decision to establish a settlement in Nootka Sound to forestall a rumoured Russian plan to do the same. Captain Bodega y Quadra's return coincided with the beginning of the period of greatest Spanish activity in the Pacific Northwest, and his organization skills were immediately needed to manage the sudden increase in the responsibilities of San Blas. Reporting to an able, "hands on" viceroy, the second Count of Revilla Gigedo, he had first to reactivate the naval base, virtually dormant for eight years, and to integrate new civilian and naval personnel, including officers sent from Spain to augment the handful who had remained. More ships had to be built to meet the demands of the renewed exploration program. Under Bodega's direction, five major expeditions were planned and carried out.²¹ Intimately related to these

Bodega's general chart, made after his 1779 voyage.

Courtesy Museo Naval, Madrid.



The celebrated British explorer Captain George Vancouver served under Captain James Cook until Cook's 1779 death, when he took over command of the expedition.

voyages was the looming international crisis over the events at Nootka.

In 1792, Bodega y Quadra was placed in command of the Expedition of the Limits, which brought him to Nootka to negotiate with Captain George Vancouver. In signing the Nootka convention in 1790, Spain had backed down from the brink of war with Britain, but the document had serious defects, stemming from the fact that it had been negotiated hastily on the basis of incomplete and inaccurate information. Key articles were open to differing interpretations. For example, north of what point on the coast could the English establish trading posts? Was it north of San Francisco as the English maintained or, in various Spanish interpretations, was it north of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the northern part of Nootka Sound or even the northern shore of Friendly Cove itself?

To attempt to resolve these and other matters, the two governments appointed their respective commissioners, and the viceroy selected Bodega y Quadra, "because of my good opinion of you, warranted by your zeal, skill and conduct. Your knowledge and experience in the northern coasts of this America assure the greatest success in this important mission."²² The British appointed Vancouver to undertake the assignment while engaged in his survey of the northwest coast.

Bodega y Quadra and Vancouver met twice, first at Nootka between August and September, 1792, for about three weeks, and then later at Monterey for about seven weeks. While Vancouver expected a rather cool reception at Nootka, his host instead proved friendly and hospitable, providing a house for Vancouver's supplies, and daily bread, meat and vegetables for his ships. In the house which Bodega y Quadra renovated and enlarged "so as better to receive the English," he entertained officers, regardless of nationality, with six-course dinners served on his personal silver, a feat remarked on with wonder by all who visited that remote wilderness.²³ The comments of visitors such as John Hoskins, the mate of Robert Gray's *Columbia*, are typical; they found the Spanish captain "really a gentleman, a friend to all the human race."²⁴ Gray even named his son after him. Almost nightly there were parties with singing and dancing, while later, in Monterey, the diplomatic adversaries continued socializing, replete with horseback riding, hunting, countryside walks and visits to the nearby Franciscan missions of Santa Clara, Carmel and Santa Cruz. International tensions naturally did not vanish; in Monterey, for example, a bullfight organized by the Spanish disgusted the English visitors, while a dancing exhibition on *Discovery*, put on at Vancouver's request by the Hawaiian women aboard, shocked the sensibilities of Monterey society.

While the negotiations themselves ended in stalemate and Nootka remained Spanish until 1795, the personal relationship between the two explorers helped internationalize knowledge of the North Pacific Coast's geography. The best indicator of their rapport in geographical matters is perhaps their decision to bestow the place name "Quadra's and Vancouver's Island," long since shortened to Vancouver Island.²⁵ More importantly, whereas Spain had always been very secretive about her explorations, the Spanish

captain provided Vancouver with copies of some of his most important charts, a gesture the British explorer reciprocated.²⁶

Naturally, such hospitality was not disinterested; while genuine, it was also political. Bodega's outgoing personality created a congenial atmosphere for what otherwise might have been a sticky exercise, for he saw his mission as a diplomatic enterprise to allow Spain to regain a measure of the prestige and stature lost after her humiliation by Prime Minister William Pitt. Naturally too, the forty-eight-year-old Bodega must have seen in a successful defense of Spain's interests his last opportunity to obtain that promotion to flag rank he so eagerly sought.

His dealings with the region's native peoples likewise demonstrate a far-from-parochial mindset.²⁷ There is a good deal of evidence in the accounts of visitors that he was largely successful in this delicate task. Vancouver wrote that he could not "avoid observing, with a mixture of surprise and pleasure, how highly the Spaniards had succeeded in gaining the confidence and good opinion [of the natives], together with the orderly conduct of the latter on all occasions towards the Spaniards."²⁸ Again, Bodega's motives were not purely altruistic, for it was important to show the English that the inhabitants supported the Spanish presence. Moreover, the Spaniard and Maquinna, the Nootka Chief, were highly dependent on each other for the stability of their respective positions.²⁹

Whatever hopes for promotion in reward for this skillfully conducted mission that Bodega y Quadra may have cherished were disappointed. Upon returning to San Blas from Nootka and Monterey, he unsuccessfully sought a transfer to the Governorship of Callao, the port nearest his family in Lima, where the cost of living would be lower and he could improve his critical financial situation. In 1794, his extravagant lifestyle had helped him accumulate debts amounting to more than five years' salary.³⁰ Moreover, his health rapidly declined, reflected in his letters by



Santa Cruz de Nootka. Bodega lavishly entertained guests in the Commandant's House, marked A on the map.



At Nootka—drawn by one of his subordinates, Jacinto Caamaño—Bodega occupied the two-story building at center left.

increasingly frequent references to fatigue and difficulty in carrying out his responsibilities. Toward the end, this resolute explorer was too ill even to sign his official correspondence. Although the viceroy strongly supported a transfer to Callao and the pension which he had long solicited from the Military Order of Santiago to which he belonged, he received neither. Even reimbursement for the heavy personal expenses incurred receiving Vancouver eluded him; the best the viceroy was able to win from Madrid after two years of effort was an ex-gratia payment of one year's salary. It had to be paid into his estate, for before approval was finally obtained, Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra died in Mexico City on March 26, 1794, at the age of fifty.³¹

One year after his death, his country's flag was lowered at Nootka, but the outstanding service he rendered in his twenty-year association with the Pacific Northwest is today honoured in his native Peru, Mexico, Spain and Canada. In California, his name lives on in Bodega Bay, where he stopped in 1775 while returning from his first, perilous voyage into northern waters.

"The Island of Quadra and Vancouver" on this 1802 Spanish map is today known as Vancouver Island, British Columbia.





NOTES

The bustling anchorage at Nootka, seen from the Spanish establishment.

- 1 This article is an abridgment, with revisions and emendations, of two articles published in the Fall, 1995 and Spring, 1996 issues of *Resolution*, the journal of the Maritime Museum of British Columbia. It appears here by the kind permission of the publisher.
- 2 A notable exception to this rule was the Cuban-born viceroy Revilla Gigedo. There were others, such as Bodega's brother Manuel, who was appointed *Oidor* in the Audiencia de Guatemala and was later a member, in Madrid, of the Council of State.
- 3 The best general work on Bodega remains Warren L. Cook's *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), with its extensive bibliography. The author of this article has completed the manuscript of the first biography of Bodega y Quadra.
- 4 The Spanish named this spot *Punto de los Martires*. The *San Carlos* was no longer with the other ships, having separated to explore San Francisco Bay and returned to San Blas.
- 5 Francisco Mourelle, "Segunda Exploración," Ms. 331, Museo Naval, Madrid. This and other quotes are the author's translations.
- 6 The cove on the tip of Kruzof Island in Salisbury Sound which Bodega called *Puerto de los Remedios* is known today as Sea Lion Cove.
- 7 Near present-day Ketchikan, Alaska. The name given was *Puerto de Bucareli*.
- 8 Bucareli to Arriaga, #2073 of 27 December 1775, ramo Correspondencias de los Virreyes, Series II, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter cited as AGN).
- 9 These appeared in the Official Gazette of 19 March and 14 May, respectively. Mourelle went on to a distinguished career, serving as Bodega's second-in-command on the 1779 Arteaga-Bodega expedition, with a notable record as an explorer of the Pacific in his own right. He also served as secretary to Viceroy Revilla Gigedo, saw a good deal of action in the Mediterranean in the late 1790s, and rose to the rank of rear admiral. He is

buried in the Pantheon of Naval Heroes, Cádiz.

- 10 See Freeman M. Tovell, "The Hezeta-Bodega Voyage of 1775: Its Significance for Spain's Presence in the Pacific Northwest," *Terrae Incognitae* XXVII (1995): 57-65.
- 11 The formal act of taking possession was performed in California at Trinidad Bay, in Washington at Grenville Bay, and in Alaska at Sea Lion Cove and Bucareli Bay. Like the French but unlike the British, the Spanish ceremony was both an elaborate political and religious one, featuring the raising of a cross, the chaplain's sermon, and various symbolic gestures. The ceremony itself varied somewhat, depending on circumstances. The deed, a copy of which was sealed in a bottle and buried at the foot of the cross, always stated that possession was taken in the name of the king and (supposedly) with the natives' consent. The fullest description of the acts as performed by the Spanish are to be found in the journal of Manuel Quimper, when exploring the Strait of Juan de Fuca in 1790. (ramo Historia 68, AGN). See also Henry R. Wagner, "Creation of Rights of Sovereignty through Symbolic Acts," *Pacific Historical Review*, (December, 1938): 297-326.
- 12 The Yurok Indians of northern California, the Quenault Indians of the State of Washington and the Tlingit of the Alaska Panhandle. Descriptions by Bodega and Mourelle of their customs, government and economies remain a major source of information for those studying the pre-contact period.
- 13 These included those attributed to Ferrer Maldonado (latitude 60°N), Admiral Fonte (53°N), and Juan de Fuca (48°N), and the *Rio de Martín de Aguilar* (43°N), which was believed to lead to the Great Sea or River of the West.
- 14 Prince William Sound was known to the Spanish as either *Entrada de Valdés* (after the Minister of Marine), or *Babía del Príncipe Guillermo*.
- 15 It is usually referred to by historians as the third Bucareli expedition, to differentiate between the attempt to locate Russian settlements, and the remaining expeditions searching for the Northwest Passage.
- 16 The priest had refused to celebrate Arteaga's marriage, for the lieutenant had not obtained the required permission from the navy.
- 17 In his "Comento," Ms. 618, Museo Naval, Madrid.
- 18 When Spain declared war against England in support of the rebelling American colonies, Bodega and the other San Blas officers were ordered to Spain's main Caribbean base, Havana, for war duty. Bodega managed to stave off his transfer for three years, spending 1780 in command of San Blas, then sailed the next year to Peru to seek mercury desperately needed by the Mexican mining industry. Since no extra supplies were available, the voyage failed, and proved costly for Bodega personally: a customs official in San Blas accused him—with some justification—of smuggling wine and other goods for personal use. The charge coincided with the viceroy's recommendation of a promotion to full captain, but it took some time to clear up the matter. After payment of a stiff fine, the promotion was eventually approved, but it was his last.
- 19 The documentation of this critical period of Bodega's career is very thin. Tepic is located in the hills behind San Blas, a healthier location where naval officers and senior civilian staff resided.
- 20 Ms. 1538, Museo Naval, Madrid.
- 21 These expeditions were the immediate re-occupation of Nootka after it had been temporarily abandoned, and four expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage: Salvador Fidalgo's survey of Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet, the first exploration of the Strait of Juan de Fuca by Manuel Quimper (both in 1790), Francisco Eliza's 1791 exploration with José María Narvaez of the Haro and Georgia Straits, and Jacinto Caamaño's 1792 survey of the Queen Charlotte Islands and lower Alaska Panhandle. He also provided support for the 1792 Alcalá Galiano-Valdés expedition, the first to circumnavigate Vancouver Island in a continuous voyage.
- 22 Revilla Gigedo to Bodega, 29 October 1791, ramo Historia vol. 67, AGN.
- 23 John Boit, *Columbia's* awestruck fifth mate, commented in his log that,
The governor gave a grand entertainment at his house, at which all the Officers of the Fleet partook. fifty four persons sat down to Dinner, and the plates, which was *solid silver*, was shifted five times, which made 270 plates. the Dishes, Knives and forks, and indeed everything else, was of Silver and always replaced with spare ones. There could be no mistake in this as they never carried the dirty plates or Dishes from the Hall where we dined.
F.W. Howay, ed., "The Voyages of the *Columbia* to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 and 1790-1793," *Massachusetts Historical Society*, (1941): 411.

- 24 Ibid., 485.
- 25 On a personal level, Vancouver makes many cordial and evidently sincere references to Bodega in his report of their meeting and in the account of his voyage, praising his hospitality, generosity and benevolence. That Bodega reciprocated is less evident; his papers contain nothing comparable about Vancouver. This should not be construed as indicating a lack of esteem; the journals of Spanish mariners, unlike those of British naval officers of the time, are frustratingly impersonal in nature.
- 26 These charts now reside in the British Admiralty's hydrographic office in Taunton, Somerset.
- 27 Any meaningful discussion of Bodega's interactions with the region's native peoples and their significance of his detailed observations to today's ethnologists would require a separate article. It suffices to note here that he exhibited unusual sensitivity to Nootka customs and society.
- 28 W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Voyage of George Vancouver: 1791-1795* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1984), 662.
- 29 The Spanish depended heavily on Maquinna for the security of their establishment, and Maquinna was dependent on Bodega's support of his senior position in the regional hierarchy above his more powerful neighbours. These included Tatoosh, whose main village was on Tatoosh Island at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Hannah of Ahousaht, and Wickaninish, who dominated the central coast of Vancouver Island from Hesquiat to Barkley Sound. If Bodega used Maquinna to bolster the Spanish claim to sovereignty, the Nootka chief proved himself equally adept at using Spain to strengthen his own position.
- 30 Bodega's extravagance is aptly illustrated by a single incident: when Broughton was leaving for England with Vancouver's report, he asked him to purchase in London *four dozen* shirts "of the finest material available." They cost Bodega a staggering £78 4/ 6d.
- 31 As far as can be determined from the documentary evidence, he died of either a brain tumor or the severest form of hypertension. He was buried in the Convent of San Fernando, Mexico City.

Artists with the Malaspina expedition drew Nootka in 1792, with the frigate *Concepción* anchored at left.





Alejandro Malaspina.

Malaspina in the Pacific:

Spanish Scientific Exploration in the Age of Reason

By Enrique Porrua

The Malaspina Expedition was not only the largest scientific effort ever made by the Spanish monarchy, it was also the most important expression in Spanish history of the attitudes of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment, which historians have christened the Age of Reason. The fact that the expedition has been almost unknown outside Spain is a result of one of the tragedies of Spanish history: the eclipse of this bright moment by the darkness of political instability at the century's close, and the chaos of war which followed it. During the eighteenth century, however, political reform, social development, economic growth, military reorganization and rationalization through scientific knowledge characterized the national life of Spain and almost every country in Western Europe. As in earlier centuries, Spain played a significant role in European affairs thanks to the profits acquired from the immense empire she controlled in America. While for Spain the seventeenth century was one of depression and decline, the eighteenth century was, above all, one of achievement. Spain in fact experienced unparalleled development, particularly under the twenty-nine year rule of King Carlos III, crowned in 1759.

In earlier times, belligerent enthusiasm for conquest moved Spanish adventurers to win as many territories as possible for the crown. The motives were religious expansion and financial gain: the famous "Gold, God, and Glory."¹ In the late eighteenth century, however, Spanish attitudes toward her dominions were tempered by Enlightenment ideals. The Enlightenment was not the spontaneous appearance of a revolutionary new way of thinking, but was instead the result of the maturation of ideas introduced by the Humanist movement during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, combined with the rationalism of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. Like their predecessors, the "enlightened" explorers also looked for economic gain, but did so from a very different perspective. The hunger for conquest, as understood in the conquistador era, was extinguished; instead, the

ilustrados ("enlightened ones") re-explored previously discovered territories and observed them through the eyes of science, seeking greater knowledge and an improved exploitation of their resources. In the phrase of the historian Iris Engstrand, "the hope of the Spaniards, however, unlike the French *Philosophes*, was that the discovery and application of useful knowledge would improve life in a practical way."² Utilitarian thinking thus guided the many scientists, naturalists, and seamen who believed with blind faith in the potential importance of their discoveries. The idea of integrating these new regions into a coherent scientific and economic system fit more closely with Enlightenment ideals than the idea of merely exercising control over them. Thus, scientific rigor characterized these expeditions, as did the broad objective of regulating the known world by subjecting it to rational analysis.

In general terms, the scientific enterprises launched by the European monarchies were a peaceful arena where the most outstanding scholars from different European scientific institutions participated in common projects with an unprecedented cooperative aim. It is important, however, to note that official interest in science often hid other purposes, such as the gathering of strategic information to further military objectives, or the undertaking of social and economic studies intended to improve productivity and revenue.

In addition to the scientific motivation for these enterprises, the emergence of rival European powers as serious threats to Spanish hegemony in the New World was a factor. England had secured her permanent settlements in North America. While her ships, along with the French and the Dutch, were hunting whales off Cape Horn in seas claimed by Spain, other English subjects occasionally harassed Spanish ports in the colonies, challenging national security. In the name of science, English, Swedish, German, and French scholars, led by experienced seamen, explored the world as far as their ships could take them. These expeditions were, to a great extent, also organized to identify strategic territories beyond Spanish control which could offer advantageous positions to counter Spanish hegemony. For this reason, Spanish scientific expeditions had the additional role of observing the movements of foreign competitors.³

On October 10, 1788, captains Alejandro Malaspina and José Bustamante y Guerra presented their proposal for a political-scientific expedition around the world to the office of Don Antonio Valdés, Minister of Marine. The thirty-four year old Malaspina, born in Italy, had entered the Spanish navy in 1774, was commissioned ensign two years later, and by 1789 had ascended to ship captain. Bustamante, five years his junior, had joined the Spanish navy in 1770.⁴ He was commissioned ensign in 1774 and reached the rank of frigate captain a decade later. Their proposal, which was intended to be similar to the expeditions of Captain James Cook and the Frenchman Jean F. G. de La Pérouse, was to sail to the Pacific coast of the Americas and proceed north to 70° latitude, sounding, charting, and observing geological, zoological, botanical, and ethnological phenomena, and definitively determining the existence or non-existence of the Strait of Anián, supposedly linking the Pacific with the Atlantic. Their plan

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Mount St. Elias towers over *Descubierta* and *Atrevida* as they venture into Alaskan waters.

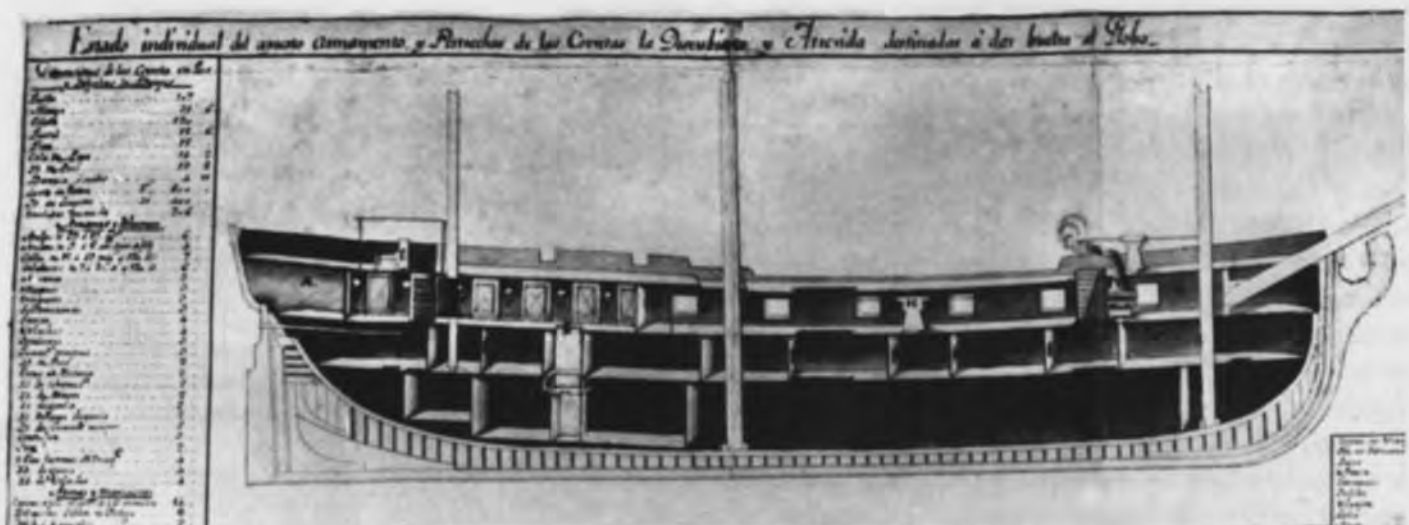
Courtesy Museo de America, Madrid.

received speedy approval from King Carlos III on October 14; with royal permission to determine the organization and preparation of all aspects of the expedition, the two officers began planning the details of the enterprise.⁵

For the expedition to succeed, the utmost attention to detail was vital. For this reason, Malaspina and Bustamante corresponded with the most important European scientists and scientific institutions of their time. The atmosphere of scientific cooperation in Europe made possible consultations with the Royal Society of London, the Royal Académie of Paris, and scientific societies in Torino, Modena, and Ferrara. Malaspina and Bustamante also sought advice from individual scientists, including Italian naturalists Lazzaro Spallanzani, Paolo Greppi, and Gherardo Rangoni, the English chemist George Pearson, Captain King of Cook's last voyage, Cook's botanist Sir Joseph Banks, geographer Alexander Dalrymple, the French astronomer Joseph La Lande and horologist Ferdinand Berthoud.⁶ Their purpose was to fulfill the scientific aims of the expedition using the most innovative techniques, the most accurate taxonomic procedures, and the newest scientific information available in Europe.

Three factors determined the type of ship selected for the expedition: the previous experience of Malaspina with the frigate *Astrea* in the Philippines (1786-1788), the results of other European expeditions, particularly those of the British and French, and the experience of generations of Spanish maritime explorers. All of them suggested the use of small ships. Difficulties with the initial plan to transform the bomb vessel *Santa Rosa de Lima* into a corvette led to a decision to build two new corvettes instead, since the expedition, planned to last three and one-half years, would require two specially-equipped ships to complete the long trip successfully. Each of them was designed to carry one hundred men, and included large storerooms intended to hold the species gathered by botanists and naturalists, and

This cutaway view lays bare Malaspina's corvettes *Descubierta* and *Atrevida*. Constructed especially for the expedition, they included compartments for laboratories and art studios.



each was armed with twenty-two cannons.⁷ They were christened *Atrevida*--"Daring"--and *Descubierta*--"Discovery"--or, more properly, "The Discovered," a name in keeping with her mission of re-exploring Spain's existing territories.

Malaspina and Bustamante selected the officers personally. In December, 1788, Lieutenant Antonio de Tova Arredondo, who joined the expedition at Bustamante's request, was entrusted with the selection of the crew, which he was to recruit from the men of the arsenal of El Ferrol. The final complement of each corvette consisted of 102 men. In addition to seamen and troops, there were officer-astronomers, naturalists, physicians, priests, a master chartmaker, and pilots. The expedition's two naturalists, Luis Neé and Tadeo Haenke, were to search for botanical species and other natural resources. The artists Juan del Pozo, José Guiú, Juan Ravenet, Fernando Brambila, José Cardero, and Tomás Suría would draw the items collected along with ethnographic images of the native population, both Indian and Creole, and impressions of the towns they visited.

The expedition also carried extraordinary scientific equipment. The importance given to the enterprise is apparent from the fact that of the sixty-eight instruments borrowed by Malaspina from the Royal Observatory of Cádiz to equip the corvettes, sixty-two were acquired in London specifically for use on the expedition. Thirty-two of the sixty-eight were instruments for astronomic and geodesic observation, twelve were clocks (among them four Arnold chronometers), and eight were meteorological instruments.⁸

On July 30, 1789, Captains Malaspina and Bustamante gave orders to weigh anchor in Cádiz. For more than sixty-two months, the *Descubierta* and *Atrevida*, commanded by Malaspina and Bustamante, respectively, surveyed the coasts of the Spanish empire in America and the Pacific Ocean.

One of the Arnold chronometers carried by Malaspina.



Malaspina's two corvettes encountered heavy weather, as shown at Cape Horn, but proved themselves sturdy.





At Port Mulgrave, in present-day Alaska, Tlingit people trade with Malaspina's men.



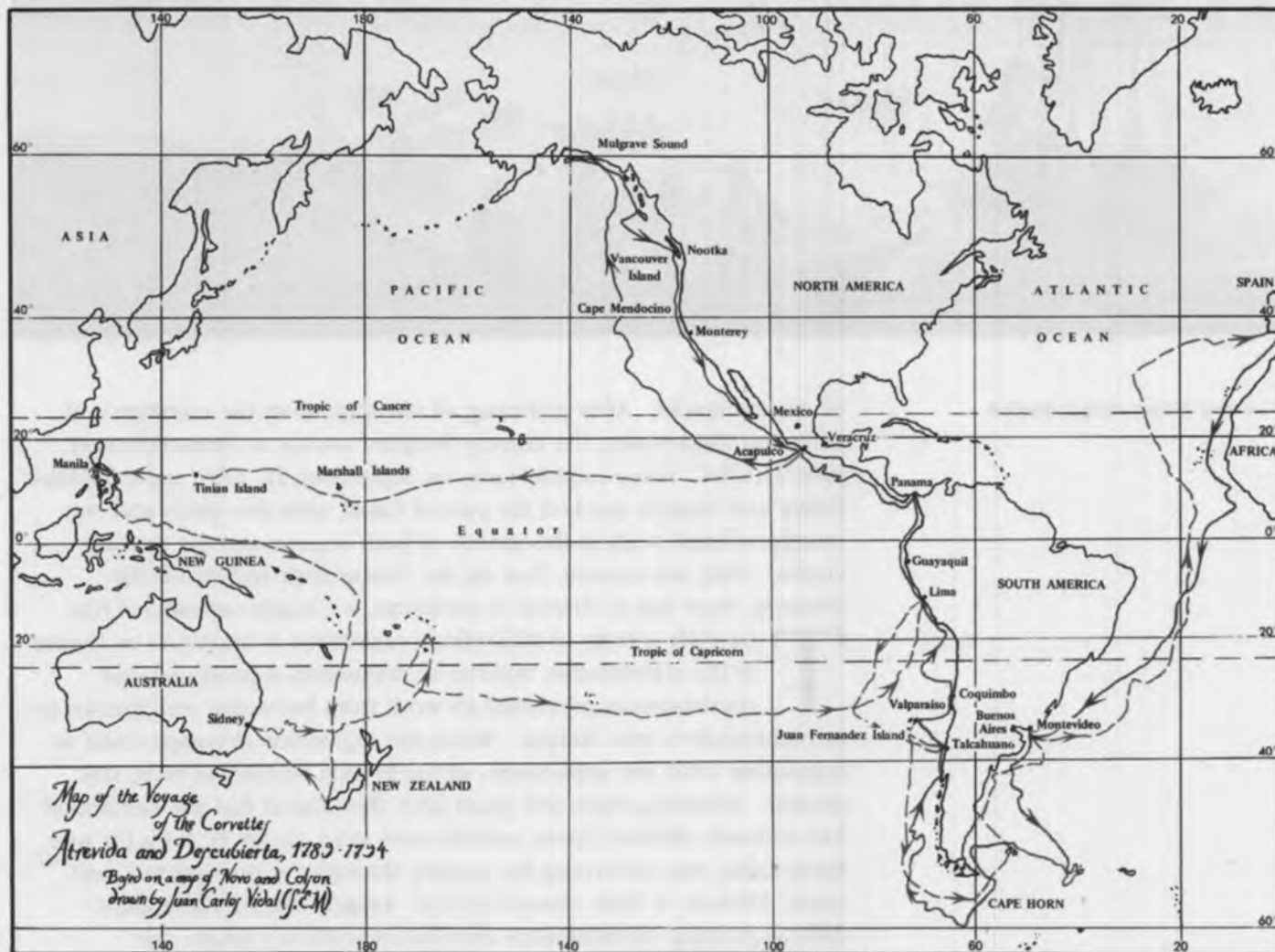
Malaspina dispatched a contingent from his expedition to explore the Inland Passage between present-day Vancouver Island and the mainland.

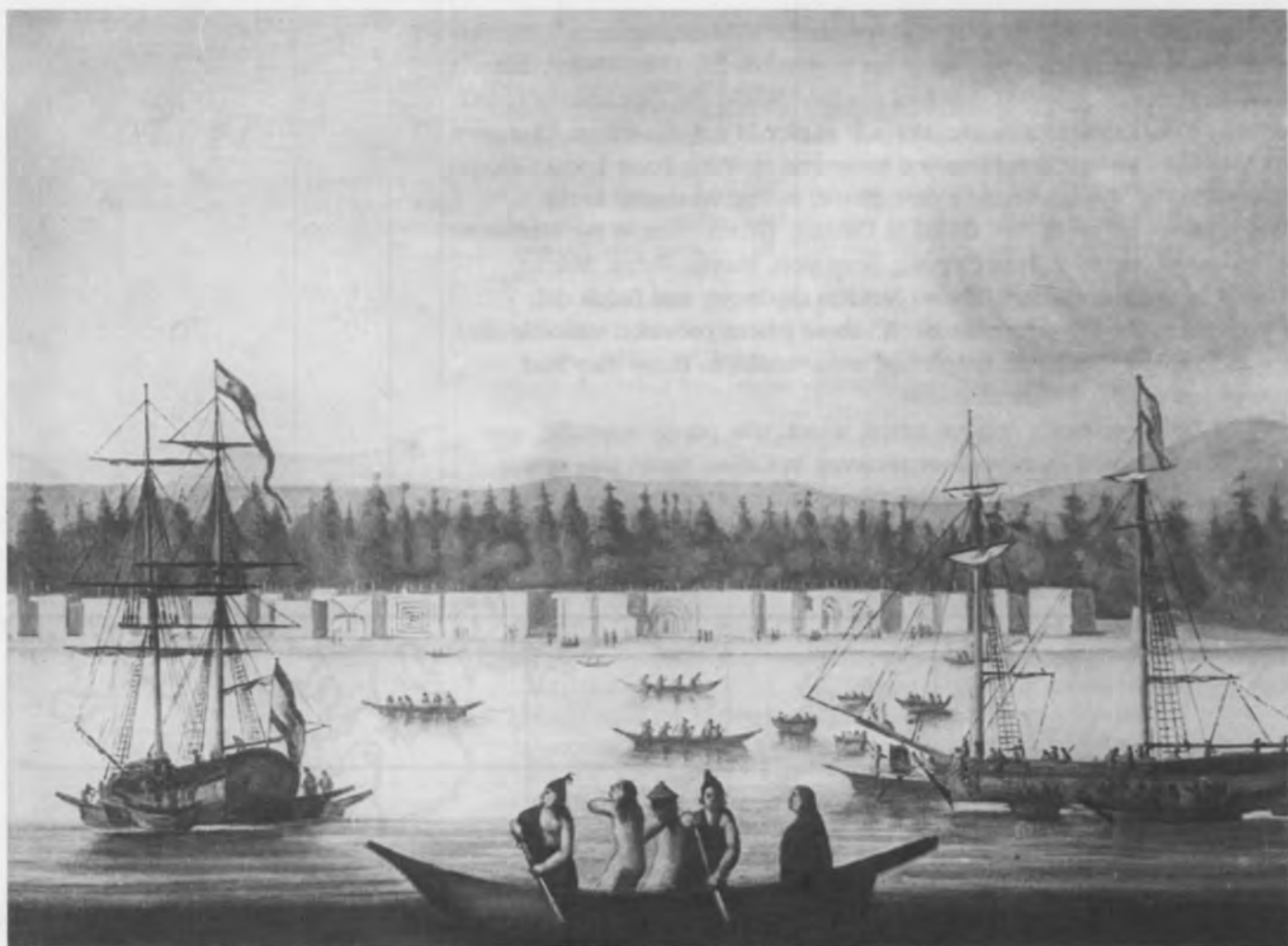
Their first destination was the Atlantic port of Montevideo, where they spent a few days gathering information and accomplishing scientific tasks. Then they sailed from Montevideo to Puerto Deseado, where they anchored to make some observations that resulted in excellent ethnographic data about the native peoples of Patagonia. From Puerto Deseado they sailed to Puerto Egmont in the Malvinas (Falklands), and thence by way of Cape Horn, which they rounded without incident, to San Carlos in Chile. Here they began their observations again, gathering important information about the area's native population, local economy, and natural resources. For the next nine months the expedition visited the important ports on the Pacific coast of South America, including Talcahuano, Valparaiso, Coquimbo, Arica, Callao, Guayaquil, and Panamá. Everywhere the officers and the naturalists accomplished the tasks for which they were commissioned. On December 16, 1790, the two corvettes weighed anchor and sailed to Acapulco. From this port the *Atrevida* sailed for the port of San Blas, on the Mexican coast opposite Baja California. After completing the work of re-provisioning with food, water, and wood, and acquiring a ship's boat, they sailed back to Acapulco where the *Descubierta* was waiting. The following segment of the voyage took them directly to the Northwest Coast, where they were commanded to seek the elusive Northwest Passage, this being one of the most important objectives of the expedition. The two corvettes met in Puerto Mulgrave, in Yakutat Bay, from which they proceeded to Nootka, on what is presently known as Vancouver Island. The stay in these ports resulted in some of the most interesting narratives produced by the expedition's officers concerning their experiences with Native Americans. From Nootka they returned south, anchoring in Monterey.

Since their only mission in this California port was to accurately determine its longitude and latitude, these days were dedicated to rest, and the men spent most of their time hunting, fishing, and taking

geographical and ethnographical notes on the surrounding area. The two corvettes were ready for sea again on September 25, 1790. Both returned to Acapulco, but followed different courses. While the *Descubierta* sailed directly to her destination, the *Atrevida* explored the coast from Monterey to Acapulco, visiting San Diego en route and charting Point Loma. From Acapulco, the voyage began a new phase, sailing westward to the Philippines. En route they called at Umatac, Guam, then in the Marianas Islands, and visited in turn Palapag, Sorsogon, Manila, Taipa, Macao, Manila again, Zamboanga, Puerto Jackson (Sydney), and Bahía del Descanso in the Friendly Islands. All these places provided valuable data for the explorers, who accomplished tasks similar to those they had completed on the American coasts.

The expedition's original intent, which was purely scientific, was interrupted by news they received in Callao: Spain was at war with France. Immediately, the scientific expedition was transformed into a military mission and ordered to escort a convoy of merchant ships from South America to Spain, under the potential danger





Courtesy Museo Naval, Madrid.

of enemy attacks. After gathering all the ships from the commerce of Lima and Montevideo, the convoy weighed anchor at Montevideo on June 21, 1794. Three months later, on September 21, 1794, the expedition finally and happily reached the port of Cádiz, after five years and two months of hard work in the service of both science and the Spanish crown. Only ten seamen, four on the *Descubierta* and six on the *Atrevida*, were lost to disease or accidents, a virtually unheard-of feat.

The daily activity of Malaspina's expedition is known to us thanks to the considerable number of documents it produced, but circumstances prevented its work from becoming well known in its commander's own lifetime. When the expedition departed Cádiz in September 1789, the implications of the French Revolution were still unclear. Returning there five years later, they found that the Revolution had seriously affected Spain, and the new king, Carlos IV, with his wife, María Luisa, was governing the country through the omnipresent and erratic Minister of State Manuel Godoy. Largely due to Malaspina's difficult political circumstances after the expedition's return, the publication of his report and other documents produced by the officers during the trip was impeded.⁹

At Cádiz, Malaspina ordered his officers to collect all written information about the expedition in order to prepare the official report. In addition to the preparation of the final work, he was concerned with other matters. Probably influenced by the anti-Godoy atmosphere in Madrid, Malaspina was uncomfortable with Godoy and the uneasy peace he had made with revolutionary France.¹⁰ He addressed an unsolicited letter entitled "Reflections About the Peace Between Spain and France" to Godoy, urging that he reconsider his policy. Though the letter was severely criticized at Court, Godoy attempted to reconcile the differences between them by signing Malaspina's promotion to *capitán de navío*.

Malaspina, however, was less interested in promotions than he was in the prosperity of his adopted country.¹¹ The Italian-born officer did not cease his intrigues against Godoy, who he rightly feared was ruining Spain, and formed a conspiracy to overthrow him. This plot, when discovered by Godoy, cost Malaspina dearly. He was arrested and all manuscripts, books, and documents concerning the expedition confiscated and kept "in a safe place" under the custody of the archivist of the Secretary of State and Navy, Florentino Pozo. A few days later, the Count del Pinar took these papers with him to El Escorial. Malaspina was tried, incarcerated for six years and then exiled to Italy for the rest of his life.¹²

Despite these circumstances, Malaspina still had time to deal with the publication of the official report of the expedition. By royal order of July 26, 1795, he received permission to prepare his diary for publication under the supervision of Manuel Gil, who was named censor and general editor of the work. Malaspina, who chose not to edit the report himself because of his inferior Spanish and lack of skill as a writer, nevertheless opposed Gil's ideas on how to compose the treatise, and wanted to keep personal control over its composition.¹³ This conflict delayed publication of the report for the remainder of its author's lifetime.

Due to Malaspina's unfortunate luck the publication of the results of the expedition seemed to become virtually impossible. In 1795, Dionisio Alcalá Galeano, one of the expedition's officers and later commander of the *Sutil* and *Mexicana*, (sent at Malaspina's urging for one final search for the Northwest Passage in 1792), asked Minister of Marine don Pedro Varela not to name him in the royal order issued after Malaspina's arrest, in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the expedition's documents from being confiscated.

On November 29, 1795, however, the king entrusted José Espinosa y Tello of the Hydrographic Bureau with the publication of Alcalá Galeano's materials regarding the Strait of Juan de Fuca, particularly the maps and the account of the voyage. Thus, the documents of one aspect of the expedition were finally published in abbreviated form by the Imprenta Real in 1802.¹⁴ After difficulties due to the political and strategic importance of its contents, an atlas containing the expedition's maps was also published in 1802 with the title *Atlas Marítimo de América*. Not until the 1980s and early 1990s, however, were the Malaspina Expedition's documents at last published in full, a long-overdue testimony to Spanish exploration in the Age of Reason.¹⁵

NOTES

- 1 W. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).
- 2 Iris Engstrand, *Spanish Scientists in the New World. The Eighteenth Century Expeditions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), xi.
- 3 See A. Mones, *La historia natural de la Expedición Malaspina en el contexto científico de la época* (Fauna y flora del Uruguay, Montevideo: Museo de Historia Natural, 1996); S.P. Herda, *Malaspina among the Enlightened Explorers: Nationalistic Naturalism or Intellectual Imperialism?* (Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 1992); A. Galera Gómez, *La ilustración española y el conocimiento del Nuevo Mundo: las ciencias naturales en la Expedición Malaspina (1789-1794): la labor científica de Antonio Pineda* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1988); Angeles Calatayud Arinero, *Catálogo de las expediciones y viajes científicos españoles a América y Filipinas (siglos XVII y XIX)* (Madrid: CSIC, 1984).
- 4 The reasons for the two young Italians joining the Spanish navy are not entirely clear, although it is known that Malaspina went to Spain under the influence of his uncle, the Duke of Fogliani. Carlo Castelli, *Alessandro Malaspina* (Milano: Edizioni Alpes, 1929), 5-12; Emilio Soler Pascual, *La conspiración Malaspina (1795-1796)* (Alicante: Instituto de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, Diputación de Alicante, 1990), 19-20.



- 5 María Dolores Higuera, *Catálogo crítico de los documentos de la expedición Malaspina (1789-1794) del Museo Naval* (Madrid: Museo Naval, 1985), 19. This is an excellent, exhaustive work. Higuera collects all documents as bibliographic entries in sections organized as economic, political, administrative, natural history, cartographic, etc. Each section is preceded by an explanatory introduction. Two further volumes appeared in 1988 and 1992. This "official" diary was masterfully edited by Mercedes Palau, Blanca Sainz, and Aréazazu Zabala.
- 6 Ibid., 21-22.
- 7 Juan Castanedo Galán, "Elección del tipo de barco para la expedición mandada por Malaspina," *Malaspina y Bustamante '94* (Cádiz: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores. Universidad de Cantabria, 1992), 26-30.
- 8 Francisco José González, "Instrumentos del Real Observatorio destinados a la Expedición Malaspina," *Malaspina '92* (Madrid: RAH, 1994), 230.
- 9 Eric Beerman, *El diario del proceso y encarcelamiento de Alejandro Malaspina (1794-1803)* (Madrid: Editorial Naval, 1992).
- 10 bid., 38.
- 11 Ibid., 47.
- 12 Higuera, 21; Beerman, 57-88.
- 13 Beerman, 49-55; Soler Pascual, 35.
- 14 *Relación del viaje hecho por las goletas Sutil y Mexicana para reconocer el estrecho de Juan de Fuca* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1802). In 1958, José Porrúa Turanzas published a limited facsimile edition in Madrid, and in 1991, Dolores Higuera and María Luisa Martín-Merá of the Museo Naval published a second facsimile edition. As the former edition ran only to 250 copies and the latter only 1,500 and was not for sale, this document is extremely difficult to find.
- 15 Mercedes Palau, Blanca Sainz, and Aránzazu Zabala, eds. *Viaje científico y político a la América Meridional, a las costas del Pacífico y a las Islas Marianas y Filipinas verificado en los años de 1789, 90, 91, 92, 93, y 94 a bordo de las corbetas Descubierta y Atrevida, mandadas por los capitanes de navío D. Alejandro Malaspina y D. José Bustamante y Guerra* (Madrid: Ediciones el Museo Universal, 1984). The largest collection of documents concerning the Malaspina expedition is today held by the Museo Naval, Madrid. Other documents, including personal reports, charts, letters, and maps are held in institutions around the world. Most can be found in Madrid in the Archivo del Real Jardín Botánico, which holds documents concerning botanical studies, pictures, and drawings; the Archivo del Museo de América, which holds an important collection of drawings and ethnographic artifacts; the Archivo del Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, holding documents of Antonio Pineda and other naturalists; the Archivo Histórico Nacional, and finally, the Biblioteca del Palacio Real, which holds collections of documents concerning the Malaspina conspiracy. In addition to those Archives in Madrid, there are collections in the Archivo General de la Marina, El Viso del Marqués; the Archivo General de la Nación, México; the British Library, London; and the Archive of the National Museum, Prague. Other materials of interest are located in numerous private and public archives in Spain, the United States, México, Uruguay, Chile, France, and Italy.

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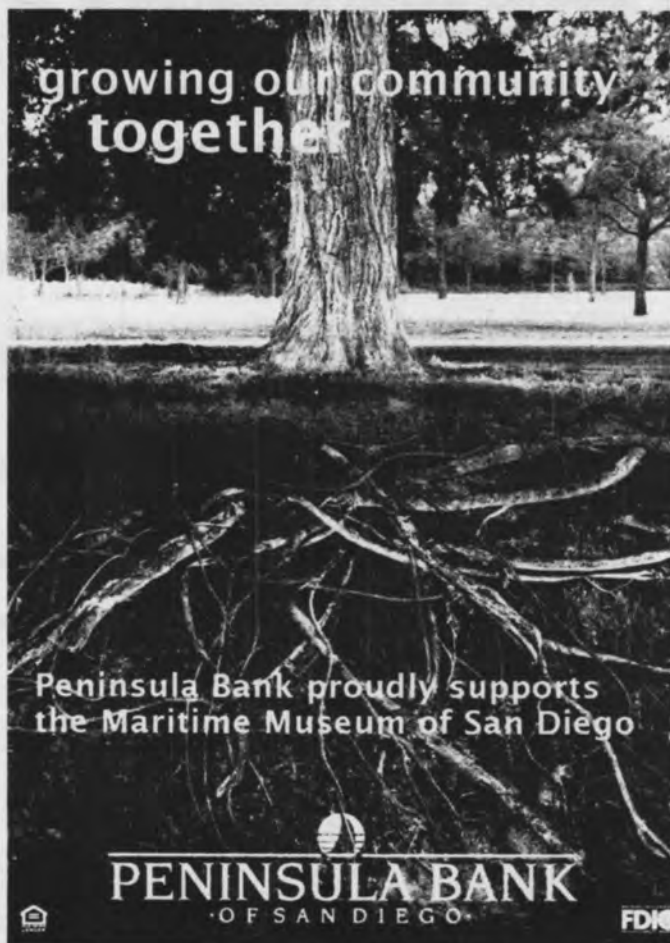
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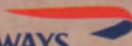


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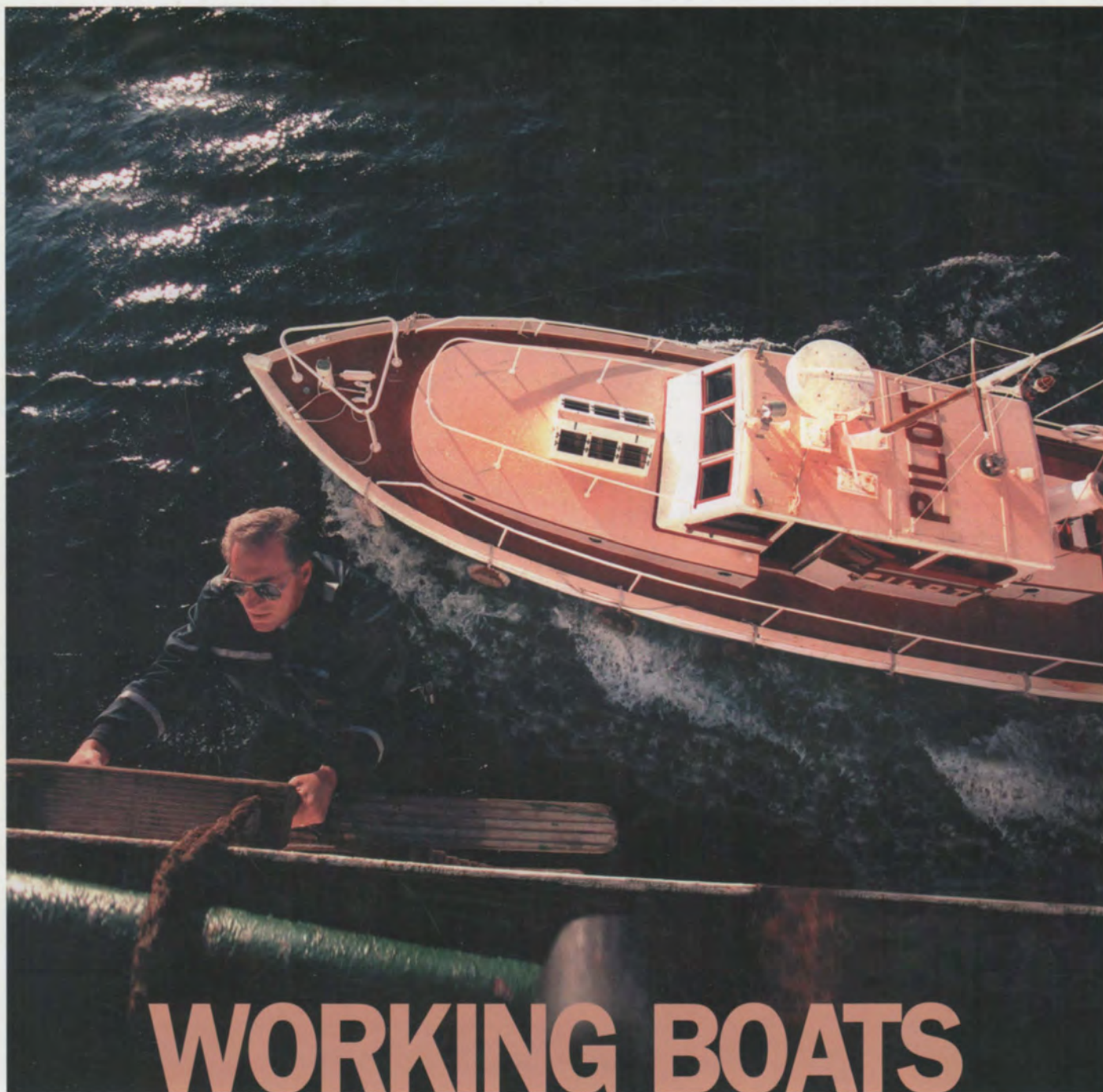
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The tug *Palomar*
nudges the *Star of
India* back to her
berth in 1931.

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"Mains'l Haul"—An order in tacking
ship bidding "Swing the main yards"
To loot, steal, or "acquire!"

—John Masefield

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On the cover

Pilot Philip Ryan climbs the jacob's
ladder to board the freighter
Choapa in 1996. Photograph by
John R. McCutchen.

Courtesy San Diego Union-Tribune

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She was the first thing they saw. Sometimes coming out of the fog or the rain, other times at night, the only vessel at sea with whom a close approach was welcome and a collision eagerly anticipated. She meant the end of a voyage and the transfer of cargo; perhaps a night on the town or simply a whole night's sleep; respite from the sea, or only a brief turnaround and then back out again. She was the link to the lights, the tugs, the customhouse brokers, the longshoremen, the wharfingers, the telephones, the eating establishments, the bars, the streets, and all the other things that made a sailortown. That, at least, is what she was to those who stood on a ship's bridge or deck scanning the horizon, waiting for her to appear. She was the first tangible encounter with the seaport and she served in that role longer, we believe, than any similar working watercraft now in existence. To those who knew her with an everyday familiarity, she was just another workboat, prettier than most, but hardly worth a second glance as she went about her business. Her name is *Pilot*.

Between 1914 and 1996, most of the commercial ships that entered or departed San Diego Bay did so with the

FROM THE HELM

Ray Ashley, Director

assistance of this unassuming little vessel. Of all the objects we possess as a community, perhaps none so closely or so durably relates to the story of our economic development. If, in other words, you desire to put your hand on the one thing, that speaks most clearly of San Diego's crucial link with the sea and its consequent rise as a great urban center,

then you need to go to B Street Pier where *Pilot* is undergoing a slow and painstaking rebirth. If you do visit (and I encourage you to do so), take your time and listen closely to the whispers that haunt that cavernous space, for they convey a multitude of stories.

As it happens, a few of those tales also emerge here in the pages of *Mains'l Haul*. There are stories of other work boats as well: fireboats, ferries, and even garbage scows. All of these vessels are rather prosaic, and none would have been anticipated own time as ever becoming "historic."



Consequently, none were thought worth saving before *Pilot*, which somehow survived long enough to acquire a degree of notoriety for her age alone, and ultimately a dawning public appreciation of her historical significance. The latter, as you will see, came none too soon.

We have a kind of cultural myopia when it comes to predicting the significance of the objects which surround us in our own time or the near past.

With a bit of understandable arrogance, we prefer to see ourselves reflected in the large, the extravagant, and the remarkable, forgetting that from a distance across time these are the least representative of our real lives and illustrate little of the everyday experience that our descendants would find compelling. *Star of India*, for instance, was one of our nation's first large scale preservation projects that reflected the lives of ordinary people, but early in her museum career she went into decline and came near to destruction mostly because the story of her life seemed to encompass nothing especially noteworthy. She was a rather ordinary square rigger that endured sufficiently long to seem just curious and romantic enough not to throw away. Yet today, she is regarded internationally as one of the great maritime treasures of the world, and the fact that she is *representative*

of typical ships of her day is one of her most important historical assets.

The myopia of significance has been a longstanding affliction and explains, for instance, why it has been fairly easy to stock restored plantation homes with exquisite original furnishings but virtually impossible to do so for replicated slave cabins. No one thought the material culture of such people worthy of note or of preservation, and in consequence it has now become rare and priceless. Maritime history is no different. Future generations of Americans will have the mixed blessing of caring for as many as eight aircraft carriers and eight battleships, one of the largest ocean liners ever built, and a large nuclear powered merchant ship, all as aging museum vessels. Yet the fireboat *Hoga*, with a long and distinguished career as a San Francisco Bay workboat and the last surviving vessel that fought at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, will probably be lost because our current understandings of significance for *her* period have yet to outgrow our conventional infatuation with the monumental.

We can't save everything of course, so we have to make hard decisions about what to keep and what to let go. As we do, it is perhaps well to remember what every historian is supposed to know: it is in the links *between* the seemingly mundane details of everyday life and the larger currents of history that the story of an entire era takes form, like the low white silhouette of *Pilot* emerging from the fog.



The new encounters the old in this 1914 photograph of the recently-launched *Pilot* meeting the worn *Desaix* off San Diego.

San Diego **Historical** Society
Photograph Collection

In Their Own Words:

RECOLLECTIONS OF SAN DIEGO'S TWENTIETH CENTURY HARBOR PILOTS

Robert G. Wright



Laid bare in the museum's restoration shop in the B Street Pier, *Pilot* awaits her return to the Bay. Her skeletal hull holds the memories of generations of pilots.

SDMM Collection

Robert G. Wright has been involved with the Maritime Museum since 1962. He has had a personal interest in *Pilot* since the early 1950s, when on several occasions he sailed out to meet ships aboard her with his father-in-law, Pilot Captain James Sorensen, and Captain Harry Krog. His oral history interviews are an outstanding resource available to researchers at the Maritime Museum and the San Diego Historical Society.

The vital profession of harbor piloting in San Diego Bay dates back to 1857. For eighty-two of those years, in every kind of weather, pilots left San Diego Bay to board incoming vessels from the deck of *Pilot*, a sturdy craft now being restored by the San Diego Maritime Museum. Surrounding that boat are the memories of generations of pilots, and this article is intended primarily to present their thoughts, captured in oral histories, about this floating workplace and the pilot's job.¹

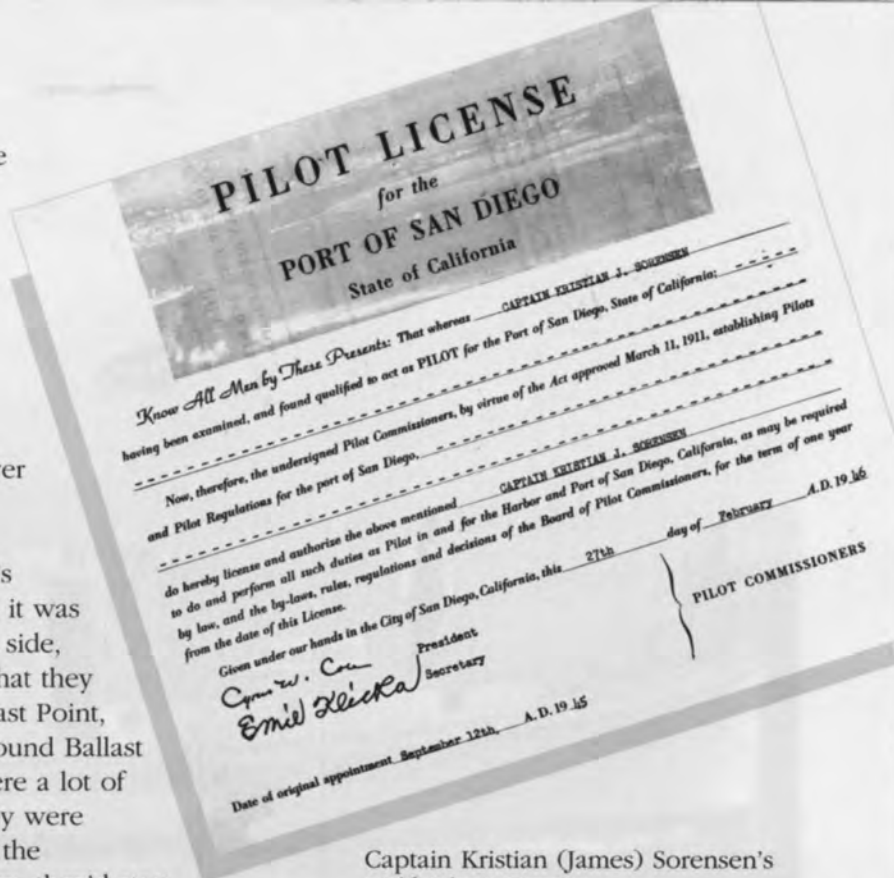
Every large vessel that comes into San Diego Bay is the responsibility of one person: the harbor pilot. The pilot assumes command of a ship the moment he enters the bridge, and relinquishes it after the ship is docked. From the beginning, local pilots have been independent businessmen, and throughout the twentieth century, San Diego typically had four harbor pilots serving together. "It was always a good income," recalled Captain Lloyd Maland, pilot from 1961 to 1986. "We owned the business and we each bought what you'd call a share. That was for the ownership of the pilot boat. We would deduct all the expenses, operating expenses, then what was left we divided equally." The senior pilot when Maland began was Captain Harry Krog, pilot from 1942 to 1972, who epitomized the image the pilots sought to convey. "He had

his pilots dressing in business suits and hats—we were businessmen. We were the first representatives of the community that a foreign ship would have. He said, 'We are going to put on a show for these people—we are going to give them a good impression.'"²

The Port Pilot's Art

Piloting in San Diego, or any port, has never been a routine job. In 1969, second-generation pilot Captain Hilton Johnson explained why pilots were needed in San Diego's shallow harbor in the early 1900s. "At that time, it was very narrow...It had a shoal on the North Island side, and then you had to come up and go around what they called the 'Middleground'. Just after passin' Ballast Point, why, you had a shoal there, you had to come 'round Ballast Point...And that was very, very tricky. There were a lot of groundings. Some of these skippers thought they were gonna get a feather in their hat—it's gonna save the company's towboat bill—and first thing you know, they'd start out, and they'd land in the mud, and they'd have to get a tug, and pull 'em out.'"³

Dredging and modern maritime technology have not eliminated the pilot's job. On charts, the Bay's channels look like well defined roads, but the smallest error can spell disaster. Captain Maland estimated that fog and tidal currents create the most significant dangers in harbor piloting, and demanded the most artful touch. He described bringing a ship into San Diego through the fog: "Contact is made with an incoming



Captain Kristian (James) Sorensen's 1946 Pilot's License

Author's collection

Captain E.B. Dunnells, a second-generation San Diego harbor pilot, relaxes with family and guests about 1916.

SDMM Collection





A ship approaching San Diego Bay after 1914 would have met this scene: a sharply-dressed pilot, his watch chain flashing, stands ready to board from *Pilot's* deck.

SDMM Collection, P2815

ship by radar and radio. The pilot boat being so low on the water, we don't pick up a target much more than twelve or thirteen miles at most on radar. We keep in touch by voice radio...As the ship gets a little nearer they start blowing the whistle. We make the approach and direct them how to come on in. We tell them which side to put the ladder on, on the lee side. Depending on the conditions with the fog, sometimes we come in and sometimes we don't come in, even with radar. If it is a dense fog all the way in to the dock, you are taking a chance. If something happens it is one thing to be underway and get caught in the fog. But to make your move with the fog present, that is considered carelessness."

"You have no set rules. You play it according to the individual case and in dense fog we would always, by radio, be in contact with the Harbor Control. They would give us the visibility check inside with our walkie talkies that we had, or we would call the Tenth Avenue Terminal or the Broadway pier, whichever place we were going to, and contact the wharf and ask how the visibility was in there."

"We would send the pilot boat down into the channel [from outside the Bay] and when he gets to buoy five he would say, 'I can see the next buoy, I can see buoy eight or buoy ten.' He was kind of like a seeing eye dog a little bit. When he would get into Ballast Point he would say, 'It looks good inside. Ballast Point has opened up. I can see a half mile or a mile.' We would then proceed."

"We're just crawling along on a slow bell, two or three knots, maybe a

little more, but keeping it under control. But you have radar. The thing is on some of these foreign ships where there is a language problem you can't rely too much on someone else looking at the radar and then trying to communicate just what they see. You are doing it all yourself. You are running in to the radar—checking it—back outside—listening for whistles and so forth—and watching, if it is nighttime, to pick up a light off of the buoy...”

“The most hazardous part of bringing a ship in, besides fog, is misjudging your tide or wind when you are approaching the dock. So many times coming into B Street or Broadway pier, for instance, if you get a certain tide, after it reaches a certain point in strength off those piers you can get an eddy where it is reversing itself. So you have to be constantly aware; you have to allow for a flood tide, for instance, or an ebb tide. But you have to be aware that when you are getting right up to the last ship length off the pier, then you can get an eddy, which is a reverse current...But that just comes with experience and being aware that it could happen.”

“One of the things my dad told me years and years ago, he said, ‘Lloyd, you can always go ahead with a ship, you cannot always back down.’ If you have too much speed on your ship and you have to back down all of a sudden, the ship will move to one way or the other...It is better to be a little cautious.” As Pilot Captain James Sorensen put it, “it’s like trying to stop a warehouse.”

Before Pilot

A predecessor to *Pilot* was the forty-two-foot sailing schooner *Tom Ellis*, which served from 1893 to 1913. “I spent all my summer vacations down on the pilot boat there with my father, on the schooner,” recalled Captain Hilton Johnson of his father’s years as pilot, between 1910 and 1925. “He used to wake me up before daylight and I used to hike up on top of Point Loma to look for sailing ships.” He continued, “It worked like this. They had a sailing ship down there [off Ballast Point], the *T. Ellis*—it was a pilot boat...And they used to walk up through the fort, and up on top of Point Loma, be up there in daylight during the morning, because visibility is better than any other time. Now if they saw a sailing ship out there...if the tide was right they’d get out, and they’d go out there,



A mixed group of San Diegans enjoy an excursion aboard the pilot schooner *Tom Ellis* around the turn of the century.

SDMM Collection, P11003

Joe Brennan, with megaphone, brings a log raft into San Diego in 1907 with the *Babada's* crew. Brennan and the pilots did not always see eye to eye.

*San Diego Historical Society
Photograph Collection*



The 'Pilot's Roost.'

SDMM Collection P2743

past the sea buoy, and they'd keep on goin' out there, until about five, ten miles out...and board 'em, and take 'em in off the bell buoy."⁴

"They built a shack up on top of Point Loma; they called it the 'Pilot's Roost'," Johnson remembered. "And those pilots, they used to walk up there, you know, and they were all getting along in age, and...sweatin', and the wind blowin' to beat the band, and the pilots said, 'Hey, the dickens with this—I'm gonna have to build a place up here to get out of the wind.' So then, every time we go up there, we take a board on our shoulder and take it up there, and finally it was only a small place, about ten by ten I guess...I've killed many, many rattlesnakes goin' up to that place..."

The shack proved to be a temporary refuge, however: "The lovers...you know, found out about the thing and they used to use that place up there, and they did things up there my father didn't like. He says, 'I'll fix them,' and up he went one day and tore the whole darn thing down."⁵

Tugboat Captain Joe Brennan—later the Port Director—described the pilots' work in the early 1920s: "We would get a report through the shipping register when the ship had sailed from Europe. Sometimes they would be reported along the way if some other ships would sight them, and when we knew about how long it would take them to arrive the pilot would be on the lookout for the ship." Once they made visual contact, the pilots "would start out with their little boat to pick them up...Sometimes we would have to go quite a distance out, but usually we would go out about five miles offshore."⁶

Relations between the pilots and tugboatmen could be strained. Brennan recalled towing a freighter down to the harbor from near

Oceanside with the tug *Babada*, prior to 1913: "It was getting late and coming down I wanted to take the Santa Rosa Channel through the kelp beds...it was so thick you could walk on it... [Pilot Captain James Keith] didn't want to follow us through there. We had him on the tow line and he had to follow...Keith yelled through the megaphone and gave me hell. I asked him what he was going to do about it and he said he would show me. He put the wheel [of the freighter] hard over and she made a great big swing and gathered up about a hundred tons of kelp at the towline and, of course, the towline parted. We got the towline in and bent it together again...and finally we got him inside the harbor where he was going to report me for disobedience...He said he was the boss because he was the pilot," Brennan recalled; "he finally forgave me but it took him a long time."

In 1907 the pilot schooner *Tom Ellis* was joined by a smaller vessel. "Dad took on a contract to build one of the first motorized pilot boats," recalled the son of boatbuilder James Sweet. Sweet was the lighthouse keeper at Ballast Point, and had opened a small boatyard there. "He worked very closely with the four harbor pilots. The launching of the pilot boat on Ballast Point was a gala affair...Mother broke the champagne bottle on the stern and christened the new *Point Loma*. Dad had designed and installed complete living quarters on board including a desk in the pilot house and also a galley and bunks for four men."⁸ The new boat was thirty-two feet long with an eight foot beam, drew about four feet, and was powered by a ten horsepower gasoline engine. The harbor pilots at that time, James Keith, Ed Dunnells, Peter Johnson, and A. A. Morris, were evidently pleased, for they no longer had to depend on wind and tide to meet incoming ships. This small craft also served as a tender for the *T. Ellis*.⁹

TRIM LITTLE CRAFT FOR HARBOR PILOTS



THE PILOT

The 1907 pilot boat.

Courtesy of Jim Sweet

A Pilot's Life Could Turn Deadly in an Instant:

The son of Captain
Peter Johnson recalls
a scene aboard *Pilot* in
November, 1925:

"There was a steel company ship that was anchored off of Point Loma, had come in during the night sometime; they didn't want her in until seven o'clock in the morning. So, Father went out there; it was kind of a dirty day, the sea was rollin' pretty heavy, and he was out there to board the ship. And he got over to the jacob's ladder, and started goin' up the jacob's ladder, and they had some guy...[holding] on one side of the ladder, and he let the ladder slip that way, and he [Captain Johnson] must've jammed his fingers, and he fell right overboard, and so then the mate and one of the sailors jumped overboard after him..."

"Father says, 'I'm all right,' so he shouted to the other guy to throw a rope around him, and he started climbing up the ladder again and he got halfway up and he fell right back overboard again and that was the end of him. Heart attack. And they pulled up the ladder, and they pulled him up on deck, and they put him on a hatch cover...He was seventy-two."

"...He always said... 'When I go, I want to go with both shoes on.'"

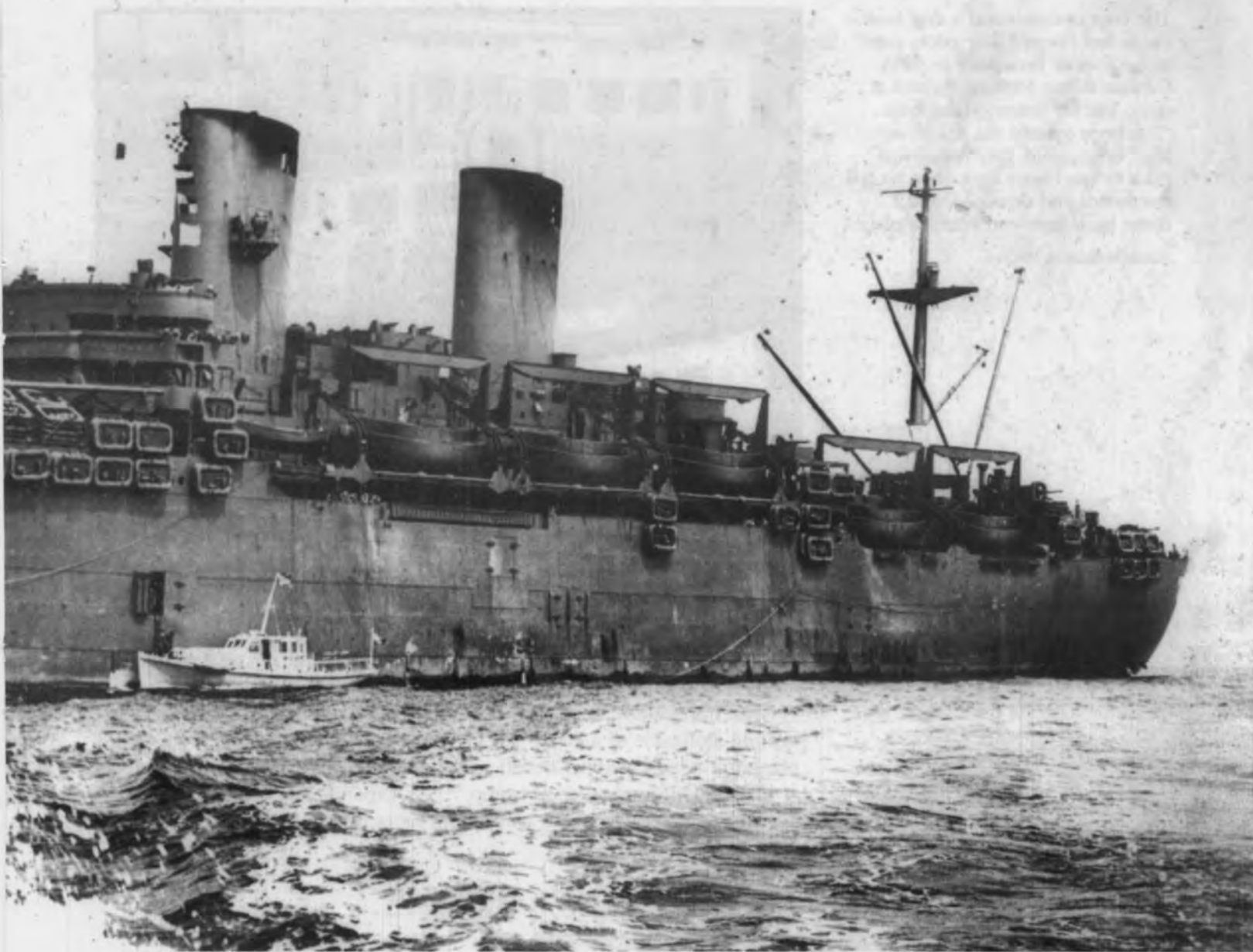
—Pilot Captain Hilton Johnson, 1969.



Pilot in 1993.

Courtesy of George R. Schneider





San Diego's Veteran Pilot Boat:

With a handshake in 1914, Captain Peter Johnson contracted with Manuel Goularte to build another pilot boat in his boatyard on Atlantic Avenue (now Harbor Drive) at the foot of Hawthorne Street. She would be larger: fifty-four feet with a beam of fourteen feet, a draft of four feet and a cruising speed of ten knots. She served the harbor pilots from 1914 until 1996.

Her seaworthiness and sturdiness uniformly drew praise from those who knew her best. As Captain Hilton Johnson remembered, "...I've been out there in seas that, it sometimes took me three hours to get from Ballast Point out to the sea buoy in that pilot boat. And boy, she sure rides 'em out like a duck. Oh, she's a good sea boat."¹⁰ "That is the best-riding little sea boat you could ever want," agreed Captain Maland. "Whoever designed the boat knew his business."¹¹ Captain Ed Silva, a pilot since 1977, was particularly enthusiastic: "I thought, and still think,

Pilot, in wartime trim, is dwarfed by the troopship USS Gen. G.M. Randall, launched in 1944.

Author's collection

The boat operator and a dog look on as San Diego's four pilots pose at the foot of Broadway in 1933. Captain Hilton Johnson, seated at right, lost his father on the boat. "I've been around the sea all my life," he recalled. "My father was pilot in San Diego Bay when he fell overboard and drowned, and I come back here and take his place."

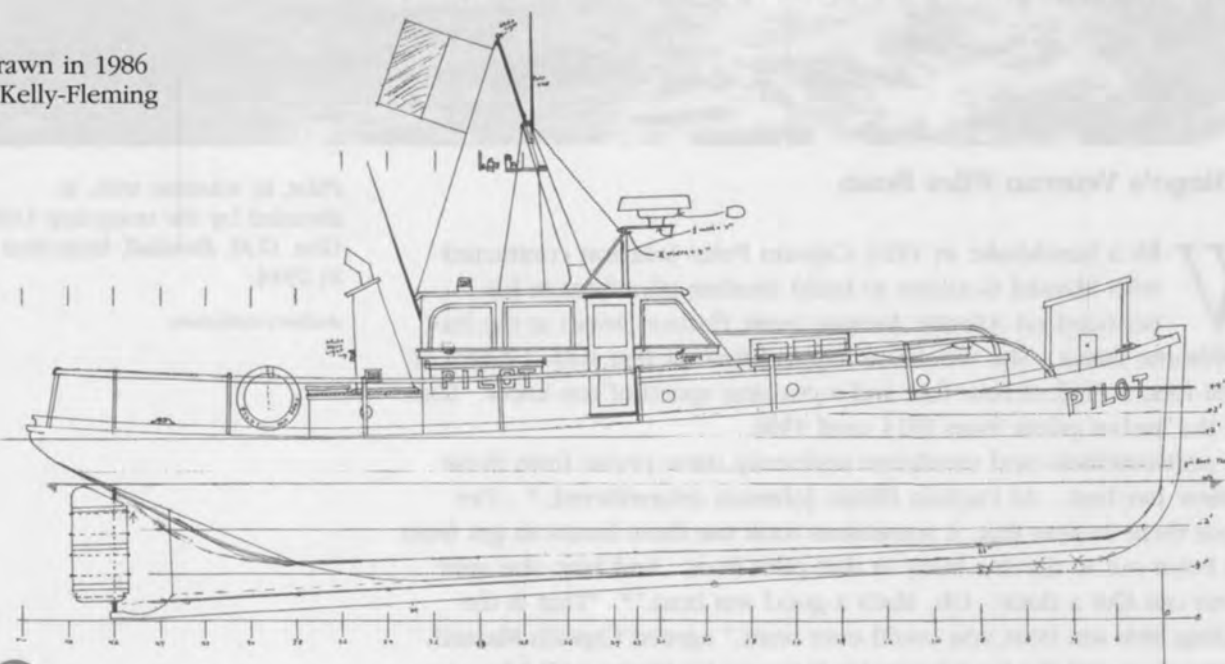
SDMM Collection, P9681



it's one of the most beautiful boats in design that you'll ever see." He continues, "I was in all kinds of weather in that boat out there and it performed beautifully all the time, including a couple of real big storms that other boats were afraid to go out in and we went out and we did fine. That boat is gorgeous."¹²

Most importantly for a pilot boat, Maland recalled, "it can take a beating alongside of a ship." He praised the "good, solid, two-inch planking" which enabled her to survive eighty-two years of meeting ships at sea; "it withstands a good bump."¹³ As Captain Silva explained, "the average boat is built to stay away from other boats. You don't want to

Pilot, drawn in 1986
by Bill Kelly-Fleming



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hit another boat. The pilot boat was built to slam into every ship that comes in here for one purpose—to either put a pilot on or off. So the stresses on that hull are enormous...”¹⁴

During World War II the vessel's operations was taken over by the military, and she doubled as a patrol boat while continuing to carry the civilian pilots out to ships. Juanita Krog helped her husband, pilot Harry Krog, from her home on Point Loma, which had a sweeping view out to the Coronado Islands. As she recalled, “they had no lookout on Point Loma at that time and Nita Krog was the lookout. They would call from Navy headquarters and asked me if I saw anything: ‘Do you see anything coming up outside?’...I would wipe the fog off my glasses and ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ I would answer. Then, ‘How far out is she?’”¹⁵ At the war's end, the boat left military service with a new engine and a pilot house rebuilt by the Coast Guard, which had operated her under Navy auspices. In gratitude for the Navy's use of the boat, the Secretary of War sent a letter authorizing *Pilot* to display six chevrons on her stack, one for every six months of service.

Restoring Pilot

“She's a great old boat, but she has really taken a beating over the years, going into steel hulls every trip,” remarked Captain Silva.¹⁶ Her age finally led the pilots to take her out of service in 1996 and arrange for her donation to the Maritime Museum. Silva describes himself as “really pleased that the museum is putting the time and effort and money into it that really should have been done all along.” He continued, “We

At the foot of Broadway in 1992, the last four pilots to work aboard *Pilot* donned felt hats like their predecessors and echoed their pose. From left, Captains Paul Berrey, Eric Ireland, Philip Ryan and Edward Silva join boat operator Jack Pinhero and Pepper.

*Photograph by Barbara Martin Pinhero.
Courtesy Capt. Philip Ryan*



just didn't have the time to take it out of service and do the work on it that really needed to be done. So when we decided to buy a new boat...all I was really worried about was that it was eventually going to disintegrate and I wanted to see that it was going to stay around, so I decided that the Museum was going to get that boat come hell or high water."¹⁷

Since January, 1999, *Pilot* has been sitting in a cradle at the east end of the B Street pier undergoing restoration. The entire superstructure, decking and engine have been removed and are gradually being replaced as money permits. "...Since everything has been taken out of the boat, the engine and now including the deck," Captain Silva notes approvingly, "they can really get in there and do it right."¹⁸ Upon completion, her future will be a far easier one. Based at the Maritime Museum, a stone's throw from the site of her construction in 1914, she will carry schoolchildren out onto the Bay for field trips and workshops covering all the sciences of seafaring, including navigation, cartography, magnetism, and the history of San Diego Bay's economy and ecology.

In 1969, Captain Johnson affirmed that the key to *Pilot's* long life was the caliber of the people involved with her: "She's always been taken care of. I think everyone that's ever had anything to do with that *Pilot* down there have all been seafaring men, and been captains of a ship. And they can take care of a boat." As she undergoes restoration in the skilled hands of Maritime Museum staff and volunteers, that tradition of care continues, and a new era of service is in sight.

N O T E S

- 1 See also Robert Wright, "San Diego Harbor Pilots" *Mains'l Haul* 28:4 (Summer 1992): 12-14.
- 2 Captain Lloyd Maland, interview by the author, 1 February 1992, San Diego Maritime Museum Library (cited hereafter as SDMM).
- 3 Captain Hilton Johnson, interview by the author, February 1969, SDMM.
- 4 Johnson interview. The *T. Ellis* was familiarly known as the *Tom Ellis*. See "Last of the Pilot Schooners," *Mains'l Haul* 6:3 (March 1970): 1; see also Chuck Bencik, "The Itata Affair," *Mains'l Haul* 33:2 (Summer 1997): 19.
- 5 Johnson, interview.
- 6 Joe Brennan, interview by Edgar F. Hastings, 16 September 1972, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Alton R. Sweet, "Sweets: Our Grandparents by Yours," unpublished MSS, SDMM.
- 9 *San Diego Union*, 6 May 1907. There is some confusion over this vessel's name, which the *Union* article cites as *Pilot*, while Alton Sweet recalls it as *Point Loma*. The date the boat was retired from service is unknown.
- 10 Johnson, interview.
- 11 Maland, interview.
- 12 Captain Ed Silva, interview by the author, 6 January 2000, SDMM.
- 13 Maland, interview.
- 14 Silva, interview.
- 15 Juanita Krog, interview by Betty Quayle, 16 March 1979, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives.
- 16 Quoted in *The Log*, 1-14 March 1996, p. 1.
- 17 Silva, interview.
- 18 Ibid.

A Glimpse at *Pilot's* Restoration

"In early February 2000 I contacted the San Diego Maritime Museum," writes volunteer Tom McNiff, who immediately found himself placed where the need was greatest: renovating *Pilot's* machinery. Continued donations of skills like his, along with monetary contributions and the expertise and services provided by several local maritime firms, will enable the museum to fulfill its vision of restoring *Pilot* to host an active waterborne educational program on the Bay. "It has been a refreshing experience to work with the local maritime community and to learn how ready and willing they are to help in this renovation project," says McNiff.

In late 1998 America's longest-serving pilot boat was plucked from the water and installed in the restoration area provided by the Port District in the B Street Pier. Staff and volunteers shored her up to preserve her shape, painstakingly recorded her condition, and removed the decayed cabin and deck, along with the engine. Tedious cleaning and the removal of paint to permit an accurate survey followed, as did her Coast Guard inspection. Original ribs, battered by decades of encounters with the sides of steel ships, have been replaced with laminated ones, and soon she will receive replacements for rotted planks and her stem.

Restoring an old boat for a new use is fraught with challenges. "As the Museum wants the vessel to be certified by the Coast Guard to carry paying passengers, strict attention is being paid to the United States Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), which pertain to the inspection of commercial small passenger vessels. In 1914 when the *Pilot* was built, the CFRs were not in force so each step in the renovation must be reviewed with the current CFRs to ensure that *Pilot* will earn her Certificate of Inspection... These CFRs can be complicated; for example, the CFRs require an automatic engine shutdown system for the halon fire protection system as well as many other safety requirements."

The engine on which McNiff and others labored is actually the third power plant in *Pilot's* history, a 255 horsepower Caterpillar D334 built in 1967, which had powered a tuna boat's net skiff before it was installed in 1984. The restored engine was reinstalled on May 4, 2000, along with the renovated propeller and a replacement propeller shaft and couplings. Soon the pair of 200-gallon diesel fuel tanks previously fitted to *Pilot* will be replaced with dual 100-gallon tanks better suited to her new role as a platform for educational activities. "When the tanks are mounted, the task of restoring the fuel systems, cooling systems, bilge-pumping systems, electrical systems, etc, will commence," notes McNiff. Recaulking, painting and the reconstruction of her deck and deckhouse remain to be accomplished. "It has been a fascinating challenge," he says, but much more volunteer and staff effort and money must be expended before *Pilot* can begin her new career.



Tom McNiff gives a turn to the nut holding the refinished propeller to its new shaft.



Fore and aft, *Pilot* requires patient work by Museum staff members Kim Blackford, above, and Mark Peverley.

—Editor

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By Contrast:

Pilots Under Sail in San Francisco

By Stephen Canright

An embarrassing day for San Francisco's pilots: On June 23, 1941, a tug struggles to pull the pilot schooner *California* off the rocks in the Golden Gate, where she had become wedged while carrying pilots out to sea.

SDMM Collection P6358

Beginning in 1850, San Francisco offered the second government-licensed bar pilot service on the West Coast, following that at the mouth of the Columbia River.¹ The narrow, rock-bound Golden Gate is partially blocked by a crescent-shaped sandbar extending about ten miles off shore, cut by three channels. In severe conditions of wind and tide, this bar can break across its entire width.

The need for pilots was recognized during the Mexican period, when an informal service using a whaleboat was offered. Vessel traffic exploded with the American conquest and Gold Rush: 3,100 entered the Gate during the first three years of gold fever alone. After private attempts to offer a pilot service during 1849 failed, the third act of the California Legislature, in December, 1849, provided for state-regulated, mandatory pilotage at San Francisco.

The Pilot Act of 1850 provided for companies of six state-licensed pilots to own and maintain a vessel at their own expense. In San Francisco this system developed into two or even three competing pilot lines, each operating two or more schooners owned by the member pilots. These lines cooperated enough to assure that at least one schooner was always on station, but at times competed to be the first aboard an incoming vessel, until In 1869 they were consolidated into a single Bar Pilot organization.²

Between 1850 and 1973, a pilot schooner was on station at all times eleven miles outside the Golden Gate. Pilots were transferred from schooner to ship aboard eighteen-foot yawls pulled by two-man crews, until outboards replaced oars in the late 1950s. Six to eight pilots sailed with the schooner when she went to relieve the boat on station, for a cruise of about a week. The San Francisco pilots, with their outside station so far offshore, were the last service on the coast to retain sailing vessels. Not until the 1970s were their schooners replaced by a class of eighty-five-foot power boats designed to permit the direct transfer of pilots.



The pilot schooner *America* passes Fort Point about 1900. Built by Matthew Turner in 1888 and never fitted with an engine, she is generally considered to have been the finest example of the type.

San Francisco Maritime NHP, Walton A. Scott Collection

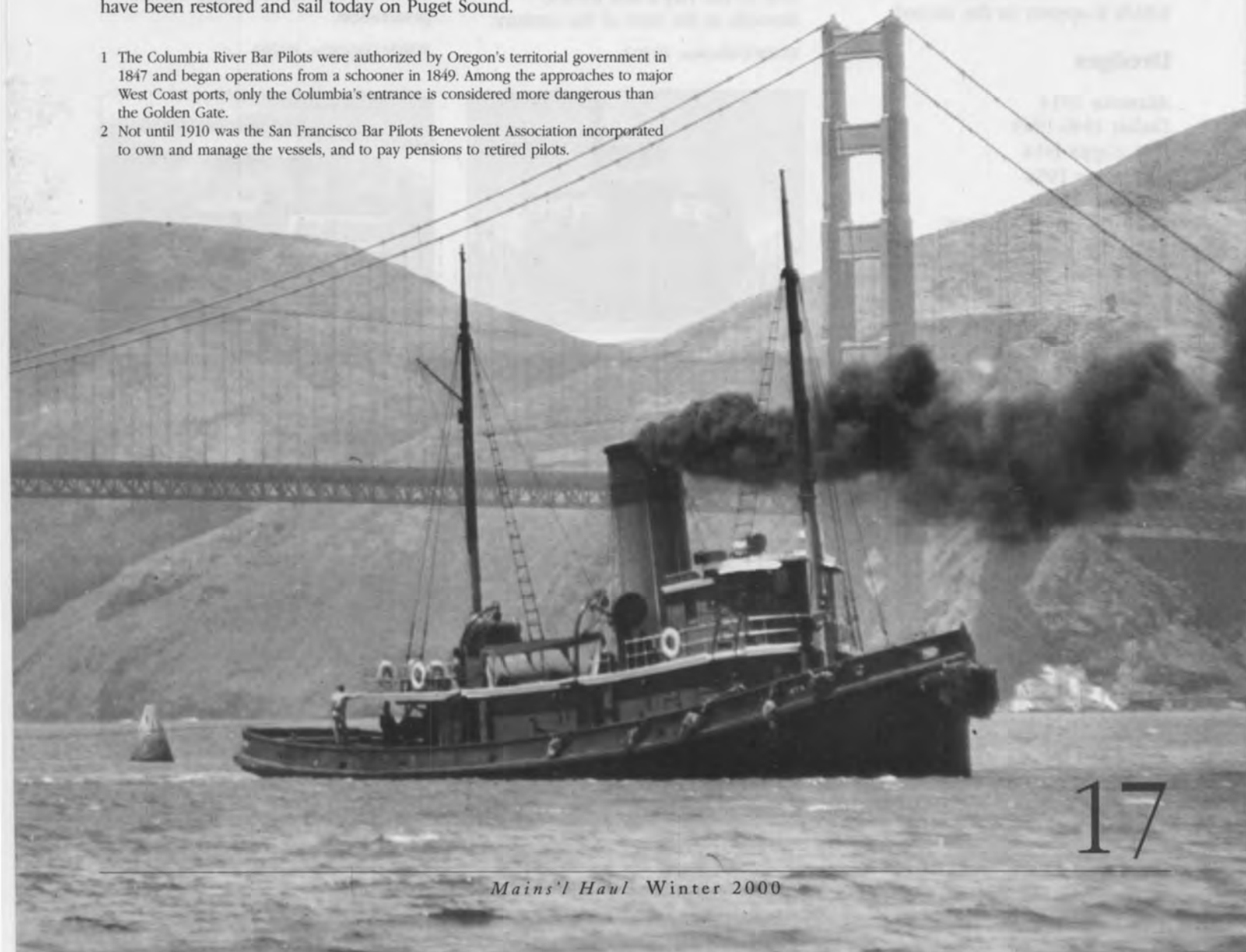
The schooners were based on the East Coast model, and all but one of the boats in use prior to the mid-1870s were East Coast-built, primarily from Boston. Thereafter, West Coast builders provided boats of the same type. Most were seventy to eighty feet long, registering in the area of eighty gross tons. The Hall Brothers of Puget Sound and Matthew Turner of San Francisco and Benicia were builders of some of the best boats.

No San Francisco pilot boats received engines until 1913. The 1895 *Gracie S.* gained her engine in 1914, and continued in pilot service until 1947. The last of the schooners was the *California*, built as an auxiliary yacht in 1924. Acquired in 1931, she continued to carry sail on station until she was retired in 1973. Both she and another of the last San Francisco pilot schooners, the converted yacht *Adventuress*, have been restored and sail today on Puget Sound.



Stephen Canright has worked at San Francisco's National Maritime Museum since 1965, and today is Curator of Maritime History at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

- 1 The Columbia River Bar Pilots were authorized by Oregon's territorial government in 1847 and began operations from a schooner in 1849. Among the approaches to major West Coast ports, only the Columbia's entrance is considered more dangerous than the Golden Gate.
- 2 Not until 1910 was the San Francisco Bar Pilots Benevolent Association incorporated to own and manage the vessels, and to pay pensions to retired pilots.



Workboats are bottoms available for hire for work in harbors and along nearshores: survey, carriage, patrol, construction, dredging, and the like. The first workboat built in local waters was a *barca plana*, an oared and sailed flatboat used in 1796 to carry workers and materials to construct the Spanish fort at Punta de Guijarros.

Quite possibly a thorough historical account of these small ships and craft, probably numbering under two hundred, will never be written, since the formal record is so incomplete. The list below, however, is a first step, confined to vessels in service between 1885 and 1990.¹ Dates indicate a vessel's period of local service or a year in which it appear in the record.

Dredges

Alamitos 1914
Dallas 1946-1949
E.M. Capps 1914
La Encina 1954-
Newport 1934
Salt Lake City 1903-1905
Santa Margarita 1957-1965
Seattle 1961-1966
S.G. Hinds 1940-1942
Silver Gate 1911-1913
Texas 1972-1983
Tualatin 1936

Ferries and Excursion Vessels

Bahia Belle 1981-1983
Barney Google IV 1936-1941
Benicia 1888-1903
Cabrillo 1972-
Coronado (1) 1886-1922
Coronado (2) 1931-1938
Crescent 1915-1929
Crown City 1954-1969
Della 1885-1889
Del Mar 1942-1945
Dolphin 1903

Some Vessels of San Diego's Workboat Fleet

Robert L. Eberhardt



One of the Bay's first ferries, *Benicia*, at the turn of the century.

SDMM Collection, P3192



Cabrillo, a ferry of a more recent generation.

SDMM Collection, P3599



The *Coronado*, high and dry in 1912.

SDMM Collection, P3159



San Diego's second *Coronado*, seen from the deck of the *Crown City* in 1968.

SDMM Collection, P3158



Crown City.

SDMM Collection, P11273

Estrella 1918-1941
Fortuna 1906-1910
Gen. de Russey 1890-1899
Glorietta 1917-1941
Golden West 1908-1938
The Grant 1914-1920
Lucille 1989-
Marietta 1969-
Miss Le Meridian 1989-
McKinley Junior 1904-
Monterey 1952-1989
Morena 1929-1938
Nautilus 1898-1902
North Island 1942-1969
Nellie 1890
Point Loma 1969-1972
Ramona 1903-1929
Silver Gate (1) 1888-1903
Silver Gate (2) 1940-
Silver Strand 1944-1969
Silvergate 1928-1941
Story 1886
Tortuga 1888-1898
Undine 1890
U.S.L.S. 1900-1902
Warrior II 1914
Warrior IV 1933-1938
William D. Evans 1989-

Below: Heeling over with the weight of onlookers at her rail, the festively decorated *Silver Gate* lies at Coronado's Tent City, about 1903. The San Diego Maritime Museum preserves the colossal wooden wheel from one of her pilothouses.

San Diego Historical Society
 Photograph Collection



Gen. De Russey

SDMM Collection, P11290



Squirming schoolchildren pack the "nickle snatcher" *Glorietta* around 1940.

SDMM Collection, P3164



The *Golden West*, shown about 1912, doubled as a tug and an excursion boat.

San Diego Historical Society
 Photograph Collection



North Island in 1940.

SDMM Collection, P5016A



Ramona churns through the placid Bay about 1903.

SDMM Collection, P3171



Silver Strand in 1950

SDMM Collection, P3189



Hot Springs

General

Aliccil kelper 1916-1918
Bacchus kelper 1916-1919
Bosun tender 1900-1917
Butcher Boy store's tender
 1 1886-1901
 2 1902-1905
Clamshell derrick 1941
Coronado crane barge 1947-1949
Cosay scow 1871
Cygnat pilot sloop 1872
Deep Quest submarine 1969-
Derrick barge 1941-1986
Dorothy R. tender 1913
El Capitan kelper 1946-1951
El Rey kelper 1946-1982
Kelstar kelper 1987-1990
Little Auggie tender 1946-1949
Loma pilot 1889
Lotitia pilot 1884
Martha water hoy 1880s
Monte Carlo casino 1936
Pilot pilot boat 1907
Pilot pilot boat 1914-1996
Pinole kelper barge 1929-1944
Point Loma kelper 1918-1928
Robert Henry salvor 1914
Runner vidette 1939-1940
Sharpy (tenders) 1890-1910
T. Ellis pilot schooner 1893-1913
Tuck scow 1903-1905
Turbine dredge 1928
Utilissimo garbage scow 1889-1897
Vulcan crane barge
 1 1985-1989
 2 1990
Wabash kelper tug 1943-1944

Patrol and Fire Boats

Ballast Point 1967-1975
Bill Kettner 1919-1961
Chief Almgren 1948-1961
Harbor Island 1971-1995
Louis Almgren 1961-1965
Point Loma 1957-1976
Point Loma II 1977-
Shelter Island 1964-1978
Point Zuniga 1973-



The *Butcher Boy* carries meat to ships in the harbor in 1905. Today she is the star of the San Diego Maritime Museum's small boat collection.

SDMM Collection, P710



The kelper *Point Loma*, late 1920s.

San Diego Historical Society Photograph Collection



The fireboat *Louis Almgren*, photographed about 1962.

SDMM Collection P12241B; Robert Ely personal collection



Point Zuniga, 1999.

SDMM Collection, P12130B



The *Shelter Island* demonstrates her firefighting abilities around 1961.

SDMM Collection, P12240B; Sterling Subre personal collection



The San Diego Maritime Museum preserves the bell from the little tug *Santa Fe*, seen here in 1911.

SDMM Collection, P3166



Training and Research Vessels

Bottom Scratcher 1974
Pristis 1899-1903
Sea Quest 1966-1975
Transquest 1972-1974
N.B. Scofield 1938-1972

Tugs

Babada 1902-1923
Bullfrog 1987-
Chore Girl 1989
Cuyamaca (1) 1937-1941
Cuyamaca (2) 1951-
Defiance 1902
Emma 1882-1901
E. Whitney Olson 1965
General McPherson 1898
Golden West 1908-1938
Hyack 1914-1928
J.D. Murphy 1987-
Katy 1888
Matt M. 1984-1987

Mister Don 1987
Pacific Saturn 1967-1987
Palomar (1) 1927-1990
Palomar (2) 1980-1989
Point Loma 1929-1937
Rapidan 1914
Relief 1887
Rover 1885-1891
Santa Fe 1888-1919
Spreckels 1901-1903
T 20 1964

NOTES

- 1 This fleet list is drawn from a work in progress, "A Register of Privately-Owned and Local Government Workboats, San Diego Area, 1848 to 1990," in the author's possession. It is based upon information found in newspapers, trade literature, survey reports, and archival collections, particularly those of the San Diego Historical Society.

The Star & Crescent Company's *Estrella*, *Crescent*, and *Virginia* await passengers about 1920.

*San Diego Historical Society
 Photograph Collection*

Robert L. Eberhardt has previously published work in the *Journal of San Diego History*. Initially drawn to the waterfront by industrial research programs in which he was involved as a scientist, Mr. Eberhardt spent a second career teaching at Mesa and San Diego City Colleges.

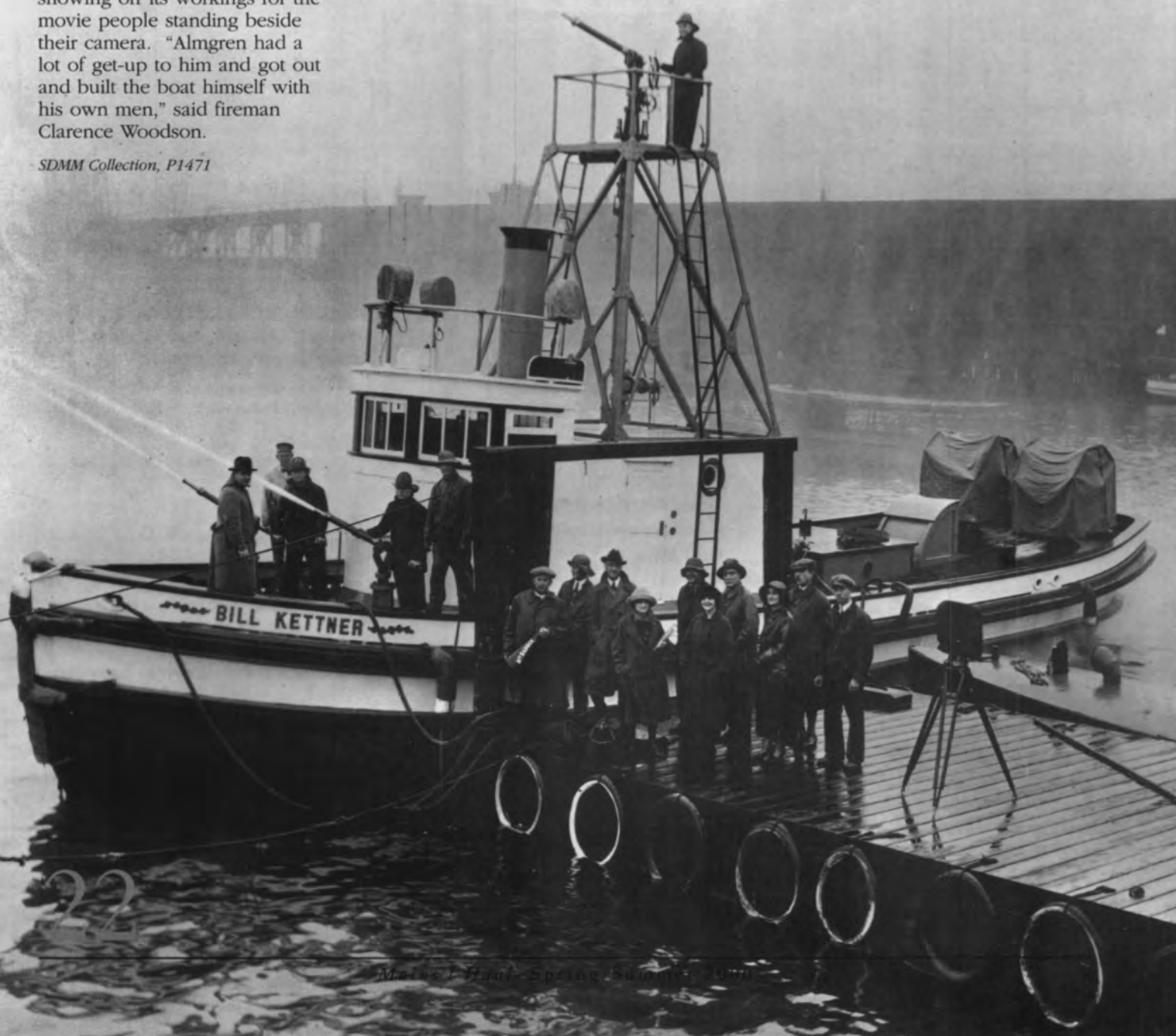
The Bill Kettner:

San Diego's First FIREBOAT

Powell Harrison¹

Chief Almgren stands at left with his boat crew about 1920, showing off its workings for the movie people standing beside their camera. "Almgren had a lot of get-up to him and got out and built the boat himself with his own men," said fireman Clarence Woodson.

SDMM Collection, P1471





In 1913, San Diego's waterfront was a hodgepodge of lumber mills, canneries, boat yards, recreation piers, and petroleum tank farms. All of them had wooden finger piers that reached into the Bay, some for 1,000 feet.

On Sunday, October 5, a fire broke out as the steam tanker *Maverick* transferred distillate to the Standard Oil Works at Schley and Twenty-Sixth Streets. A thirty-five-hour fire culminated in the largest explosion in the city's history at 11:00 Monday night. A gasoline storage tank blew and set off ten of twelve tanks in the yard, along with 1,260,000 gallons of crude oil, plus seventy thousand gallons of naphtha, stove oil and other flammable products. Flaming oil flowed into the Bay and ravaged Buchanan Lumber Company and Whiting-Mead Commercial Company.

These tired firemen defeated a nearly disastrous blaze aboard the *Alaskan* in 1910, but waterfront fires like this one finally prompted San Diego to build a fireboat.

SDMM Collection, P1539



On launching day, the *Bill Kettner* slides unceremoniously into the mud, waiting to be lifted by the tide.

SDMM Collection, P12233B; Robert Ely personal collection

Tuesday morning's San Diego Union blared:

WAVE OF BLAZING OIL SWEEPS LUMBER YARDS

**Quarter Million Gallon Gasoline Tank
Blows Up Scattering Fire Abroad**

Powell Harrison comes by his interest in fireboats naturally; throughout his career he has been involved in disaster preparedness. Powell retired from the Coast Guard with the rank of Commander, and has held safety and health positions with the City of San Diego. He volunteers in the San Diego Maritime Museum Library.

Hundreds of spectators clogged streets and nearby piers and dozens of boats idled in the Bay to watch. In spite of the mayhem, no firemen nor onlookers were lost.

Fire Chief Louis Almgren, not a man to stifle his feelings, was quoted on the front page:

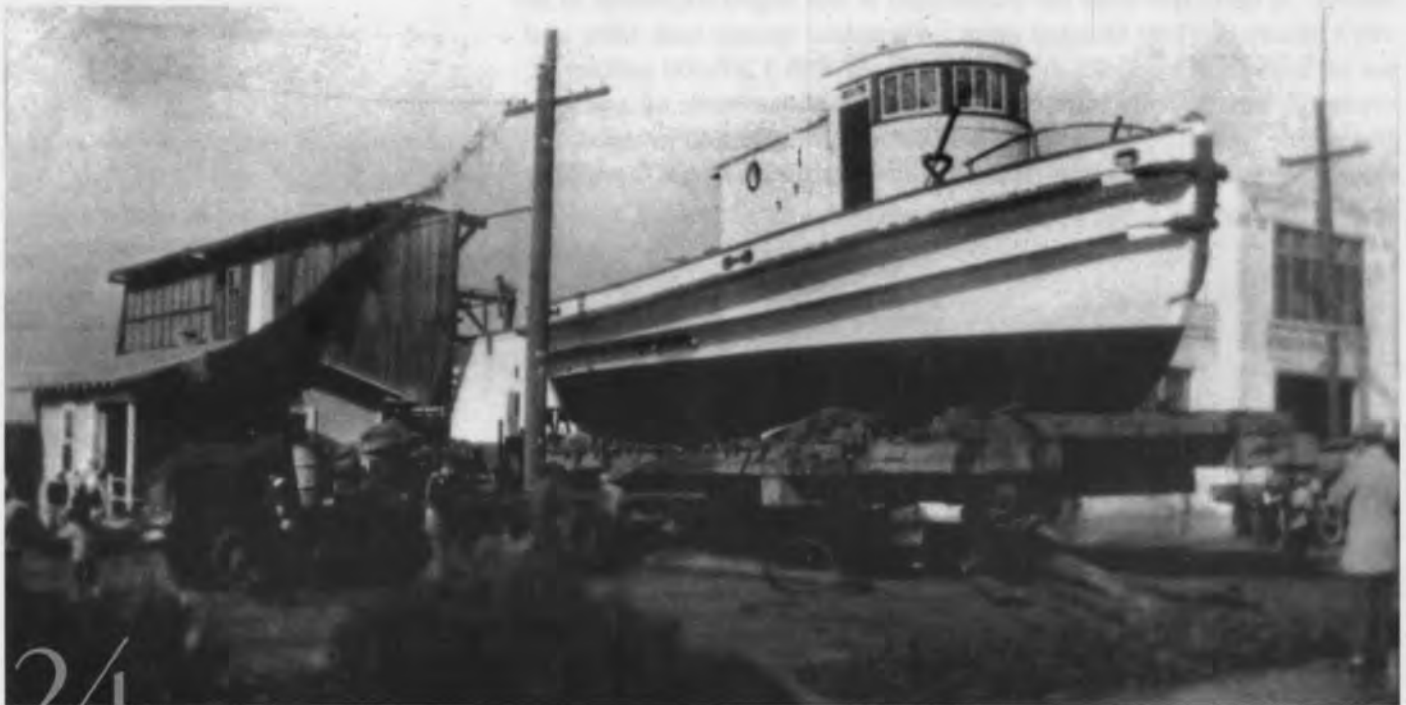
This is the luckiest thing I have ever seen. But I predict that some day there is going to be a blaze in San Diego that will take the waterfront and possibly the whole town unless we get what the department has been fighting for, for the past two years—a fire tug.²

The port was growing, but it required five years of badgering by the chief for the City Council to approve \$100 to draw up plans.³ The chief's fire tug didn't get its bottom wet until late 1918, but the harbor was spared serious fires during the wait.

This tug wasn't the first self-propelled fireboat; New York took that honor in 1866. Nor was she first on the West Coast, for Seattle floated its fireboat in 1890, followed by Portland, Oregon fourteen years later. San Diego and Ketchikan, Alaska, launched their fireboats in 1918, one year ahead of Los Angeles.⁴ The San Diego boat was neither biggest nor fastest, nor did she throw more water than her peers, but she protected the harbor for forty-three years, doing jobs that fire engines ashore

On November 19, 1918, the fireboat emerges from the shed beside the firehouse for the twelve-block trip to her launching. "While the firemen were not busy fighting fires, they were kept busy boat building," recalled fireman Clarence Woodson.

SDMM collection, P12233B





couldn't touch. She had the first gasoline engine in an American fireboat, perhaps the first in the world, and some of her engineering innovations were copied throughout the fire service.⁵

The firemen themselves built San Diego's first fireboat in a shed next to Station 6 on the corner of Columbia and Cedar Streets (now the Firehouse Museum), about twelve blocks from her launch site. Chief Almgren recruited men who had skills he needed to get the boat built, but they were firemen first, and they sandwiched boat building between fire alarms.

Master Mechanic Hubert Golay's crew included Charles Wilson Hunter, a licensed locomotive engineer who learned the machinist's trade at Campbell Shipyard. Hunter alternated shifts with Harry Lemon in the machine shop.⁶ Stanley Dobson, who learned wooden pattern making in his father's blacksmith shop, fashioned patterns for the innovative pumps designed by Walter Forward. The shop crew molded and cast the pumps on site, and made castings for discharge valves on the boat's ten fire hose connections and water-cooled manifolds for the main engine and two pump engines.⁷ Carpenters among them scoured San Diego's back country for oak limbs with natural bends for ribs and knees, as shipbuilders had for centuries.⁸

Work was underway by January 1916, but Chief Almgren had to report to the Council a year later that the tug was "delayed considerable, as we were unable to get materials on account of present war; I expect to have the tug launched the first half of 1918." There was good news: the Santa Fe Railroad offered free dockage and crew quarters (none being designed

The *Kettner's* monitors douse the abandoned Star & Crescent company pier in 1923.

SDMM Collection, P3157

aboard the boat) at its wharf. The location became Station 16, or the Market Street Station, home for the fireboat for twenty-two years.⁹

On November 19, 1918, Palmer Brothers house movers towed the nearly-ready fireboat to the foot of Market Street and slid her down greased timbers into the mud at low tide.¹⁰ Chief Almgren reported in January 1919 that she was ready for emergency use, but with so many firemen in the armed forces he could not yet commission her. He promised the City Council that another six weeks would see her demonstrate "a complete success in both seaworthiness and operation." Commissioned with a crew of four on June 30, 1919, she cost \$8,500 outfitted with hose and other gear, excluding the labor of the firemen who built her.¹¹

The New Fireboat

Named for a congressman who was instrumental in increasing the Navy's presence in San Diego, the wooden-hulled *Bill Kettner* was fifty-eight feet, nine inches long, with a beam of nineteen feet, seven inches, and drew almost seven feet. Her rated tonnage was fifty-five tons gross. Her gasoline main engine was a 220-horsepower, six-cylinder Atlas-Imperial engine with special qualities noted by her longtime engineer, Bob Ely:

With all the monkey motion and looseness it was impossible to get all the throttles' exact openings together, especially at idle. Timing could be different on each cylinder so it was like having six one-cylinder engines hooked up to one crankshaft. No other engine on the Bay sounded like its "pluckety-pluckety-PUT-put pluckety-pluckety-Putput" and people all around knew when the *Bill Kettner* was underway.

The *Kettner* was called to the side of the carrier USS *Langley* in 1927, when blazing aviation gasoline killed one sailor and injured four others.

SDMM Collection, P10891D





Firemen in their dress uniforms pose proudly near the ferry landing in 1923.

SDMM Collection, P12192B

The engineer faced other challenges as well:

The *Bill Kettner* was not pilothouse-controlled. We had the signal bell system...an engine room telegraph. So when they wanted to go ahead, they pushed the lever ahead, it rang the bell and the telegraph showed down below, and I put it in gear and gave it whatever throttle they wanted. Every time we got a new coxswain to run the boat, we had to practice to get used to one another...a lot of practice time was spent on smart teamwork.¹²

Fireman Walter Forward's innovative fire pumps were powered by a pair of Seagrave gasoline engines, mounted aft of the main engine.¹³ His design allowed this pair of centrifugal pumps to be linked one to another in series to maximize pressure out of one or two nozzles, or operated in parallel to obtain maximum volume out of multiple nozzles.¹⁴ A third pump was mounted forward and driven through a clutch off the main engine. Each pump had its own sea chest—a screened salt water intake in the bottom of the hull—and great care was needed in shallow water to avoid sucking mud and debris into the pumps.¹⁵

Bill Kettner made ten knots at top speed and could discharge three thousand gallons per minute through eight streams at once, later increased to five thousand gpm through thirteen streams. Two monitors—fixed nozzles, or water guns—stood on the foredeck with a third atop a twelve-foot tower on the engine house. The high monitor's reach exceeded 350 feet, but it created substantial back-pressure that affected the boat's operation.¹⁶ In her first six months in service Chief Almgren's fireboat answered only eight alarms. Her first big test came shortly before Christmas, 1920.¹⁷



At work on the Star & Crescent Company's boathouse in 1930.

San Diego Historical Society
Photograph Collection

A Fire Steams into Port

The freighter *Sudbury* radioed from 150 miles southwest of San Diego on December 7, 1920 to report damaged cargo and a fire amidships after two days of rough weather.¹⁸ She carried pianos, silks, and cosmetics; the ship's fuel tanks were below the involved space and fuel lines ran through it. Sixty barrels of formaldehyde were lashed down on deck.

Smoke and toxic fumes invaded every open space on the ship, forcing the helmsman to abandon the wheel frequently and run upwind to clear his lungs. Red-hot decks scorched the crew's feet. The crew pumped steam into every opening to the burning space until *Sudbury* was low on fresh boiler feed water. Pumps were clogged, water was seven feet deep in the hold, and she listed sharply to port. Captain Walter O'Brien decided to run for San Diego and radioed, "Can you help me?"

A port pilot and Chief Almgren aboard *Bill Kettner* met *Sudbury* four miles off the Point Loma whistle buoy and surveyed the emergency. Almgren felt that the crew had contained the fire reasonably well. He directed the ship to the Municipal Pier and called his truck companies to respond with special equipment. The fireboat sprayed cooling water on *Sudbury's* hull during the transit.

At 10:00 P.M. firemen swarmed aboard and relieved the ship's exhausted crew. *Kettner* played five streams of water on the ship while one engine company went below, cut a hole through the engine room bulkhead, and pounded the fire with hose streams. Another company

drilled holes in the side of the hull and piped 1,600 gallons of carbon dioxide-producing chemicals from wagons on the pier. The flames were out by 8:00 A.M.

The Chief took a calculated risk that the fire was controllable, and displayed both courage and skill in protecting the lives of forty-five crewmen, saving the ship, and preventing a \$5 million loss to the owners and shippers. Modern second-guessing, however, suggests that *Sudbury* was a potential bomb that could have wiped out most of downtown, and that the attack should have been mounted in a more isolated location!

During her first decade in operation, the *Bill Kettner* answered 239 alarms, or about two per month. Forty-eight of these required pump and hose response, an average of once every two months. She spent 231 hours at alarms during the decade, or about 1.9 hours monthly.¹⁹

A few incidents reported in the San Diego Union suggest the variety of situations in which she served prior to World War II:

At the Coronado Ferry Landing early on November 6, 1921, the incoming tide lifted a substantial oil slick to an abandoned fire on Coronado's bayside beach, and the receding tide delivered flaming oil to slips where the ferries *Morena* and *Ramona* were moored for the night. *Morena* was taking on fuel through a six-inch line that was strapped to beams on the wharf as flames began to eat away at the wooden structure. The Coronado and North Island Fire Departments arrived, along with launches full of sailors from ships in the harbor. The fuel valve was turned off, the two departments began throwing water on the fire, and they called for *Bill Kettner*.

Two men ran aboard *Morena* and succeeded in getting her clear of the fire, while another intrepid rescuer ran across burning approaches to *Ramona*, hacked her mooring lines free with an axe, and drifted out with her on the tide. Meanwhile the fireboat arrived, her crew augmented by men from an engine company. The next day's paper reported, "The tug Bill Kettner is credited with saving the slip and doing much to save the ferry building. With several streams of water under high pressure, the tug steamed into the stifling smoke to direct its powerful hose lines to the thickest part of the fire."²⁰

On the last Friday in October 1929, tramps or vandals set fire to the *Mobican*, a former sailing ship which had fallen on hard times, becoming successively, a cargo barge, a molasses storage tank, then an oil barge, until she was a relic on the flats off National City. A bucket brigade from Sunset Oil Company could not quell the blaze and the fireboat was called. As a reporter watched, her mizzenmast stump "flamed like a torch above the wreck and the fireboat Bill Kettner administered the coup de grace to the old windjammer, a well-directed stream from a turret nozzle striking the mast and knocking it over the side, where it fell with a mighty hiss in the waters of the bay."²¹

Another fire on January 11, 1930 broke out in the Star and Crescent boathouse at the foot of Broadway, a depot and lunchroom which served Coronado passenger ferries. In the small hours of a stormy Saturday morning, a fire in the ice machine room blew out windows on the first floor. When Engine Company 1 rolled up, "the blaze was illuminating the western sky. Firemen from land companies and the fireboat Bill Kettner found the top of the building a hurricane of fire, flames rising

from every window and from a gaping hole in the south side of the roof." From windward, *Kettner* "brought its big deck-and-tower nozzles into play. After a hard struggle the flames were subdued."²²

Hard Times

The City cut back on all staff, including the fire service, in 1933, leaving the engineer the lone survivor on *Bill Kettner*. The regular watch at Station 6 became a flying squad: on a waterfront alarm, the boat engineer started the tug's engine while the Station 6 engineer drove its pumper to the pier, followed by the captain and two firemen in a Model A Ford. On his arrival, the captain chose whether to respond with the fireboat or the pumper.²³

Chief Almgren asked the City to fully staff the boat, pointing out that only the Station 6 men were trained for her and that their mid-town area was abandoned during boat alarms, a plea which his successor, J.E. Parrish, continued making to deaf ears through 1942.²⁴ Conditions improved in 1940, after the Works Progress Administration (WPA) underwrote a new station and mooring for *Bill Kettner* at 402 Harbor Lane, near the car ferry slips.²⁵

As World War II loomed, Chief Parrish's appeals for manpower in the face of mobilization and increased naval activity grew louder and more urgent. He declared that the waterfront had the least protection of all parts of the city. Soon Pearl Harbor came and went, and the Coast Guard drafted *Bill Kettner*.²⁶

War and Gray Paint

The U.S. Coast Guard came under Navy command in November 1941 and was assigned the security and safety of American ports. Bert Shankland, a retired fire captain of the *Kettner*, was appointed Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer and placed in charge of fire protection around San Diego Bay. A private sixty-eight-foot boat, the *Sportfisher*, was taken on loan in October 1942 and converted into San Diego's second fireboat.²⁷ When the Coast Guard leased *Bill Kettner* and Station 16 from the city the following May, she received about \$20,000 in upgrades, and the crew grew to seven, soon to twelve, on two watches, including a cook from the Coast Guard women's reserve. Bob Ely recalled the arrival of this woman in the fireboat's all-male world:

CWO Shankland assembled the crew and declared that any man who embarrassed her with foul or suggestive language, or who dared lay a hand on her, would meet him forthwith in a court martial. She entered the galley and jolted all hands with: "Where in hell can a cook find a sharp #&% knife in this dump?"²⁸

The intensity of war changed *Bill Kettner's* life abruptly. Commercial fishing boats still chugged out to sea and presented familiar problems for the firemen, but these craft now dodged increasing numbers of warships and service vessels, and sections of the harbor became restricted areas: shipyards, cargo piers, certain anchorages, and fuel depots. The fire hazards of marine fuel handling, ship construction, more seaplane flights, and the ammunition aboard the warships, compounded by the urgency



of supporting Pacific Theater operations, presented risks not seen in peacetime. Only days after her wartime name change to *CG58016F*, the former *Bill Kettner* helped extinguish a fire on the British auxiliary aircraft carrier *HMS Engadine*.²⁹

Another converted fishing boat joined the fireboat squadron in September 1944. From October 15, 1942 to November 1, 1945, the three boats answered 318 alarms, responding to fires aboard LSTs, LSMs, LCIs, floating drydocks, and submarines as well as fishing boats and other small craft.³⁰ Fireboats worked at least four airplane crashes, and stood by while Consolidated Aircraft experimented with new seaplanes and rocket-assisted takeoffs. The Navy Landing float at the foot of Fifth Street was a nuisance; *CG58016F* pumped it out a dozen times.

Far more time was spent saving floats and boats from sinking than extinguishing fires. This led Chief Specialist Bob Ely to experiment with eductors, also called jet pumps or ejectors. An eductor takes advantage of a high-pressure water stream's ability to entrain, or suck, a second stream into the vacuum created by the high-pressure stream. The water it draws in is discharged out of a larger hose. There are no moving parts to maintain and grit and small debris will pass through without risk. A week after installing a pair of the eductors he designed aboard

Kneeling on either side of Bert Shankland during the *Bill Kettner*'s wartime service are the cook—the crew's lone woman—and Bob Ely.

SDMM Collection, P12235B; USCG photo; Robert Ely personal collection

CG58016F, their action saved the Navy tug *Satanta*, gashed by a transport's churning screws, and earned Ely a commendation.³¹

The fireboat crew was also called to blazes ashore: dozens of scrap and rubbish fires, the Sun Harbor Cannery, backup for a fire in downtown Coronado, and the escort carrier USS *Tulagi*, in drydock at the 32d Street Repair Base.

Civvies Again

When wartime secrecy lifted, the papers once again let the locals know the good deeds of their *Bill Kettner*, as when she saved the tuna boat *Old Glory* and its \$10,000 cargo of skipjack from loss by fire.³² She and Station 16 returned to civilian control early in November 1945, and the City Council recognized the importance of reliable marine fire protection by restoring the crew to four men per watch. Her black-and-white livery returned, but soon she sported unambiguous fire engine red.

With the war over, San Diegans and tourists took to the water in pleasure boats, but they didn't do it very well. More than half of all fireboat alarms from July 1946 through June 1947 were for small boat fires and assists. When George Courser became Fire Chief in April 1947, he tightened fire prevention at the busy boatyards and marinas, and acquired a second fireboat: the small, fast, steel-hulled *Chief Almgren*, also berthed at Station 16.³³ The new boat proved justified; the 1948-1949 fiscal year saw 104 harbor alarms, increasing to 173 the following year.³⁴

The two boats responded to one of San Diego's most spectacular alarms, which wiped out several businesses on November 3, 1949. The crew on a ferry returning from Coronado reported a blaze in the Fish Market Building at Pacific Highway and Harbor Drive, and *Bill Kettner* was quick to respond from a block away. Spreading from a linen closet in Anthony's Fish Grotto at street level, the fire quickly laid waste to the restaurant and to Lauro & Goodman's men's clothing factory above. The boats responded with hose and monitor streams while the Coast Guard Cutter *Perseus* illuminated the scene with its searchlights, although the bulk of the work fell to the engine companies ashore. The morning paper declared it the most costly fire in the waterfront's history.³⁵

San Diego's growing tuna boat fleet created new firefighting challenges. When the price for tuna dipped early in 1951, more than 160 tuna boats remained in port both to protest prices and as an economic necessity. During this convenient time for maintenance and alterations, fireboats answered three alarms on fishing boats in February alone.³⁶ Belowdecks fires in engine rooms and among pressurized ammonia refrigeration systems were tough on firemen. More than once firemen fell through open hatches as they stumbled through unfamiliar, unlit spaces pulling charged hose lines through dense smoke, with inadequate breathing apparatus.³⁷

Bill Kettner's Decline

Despite an engine overhaul and the replacement of rotted wooden hull members, by 1956 the tug showed serious wear for which the Fire Department lacked cost-effective solutions.³⁸ Her speed had slackened to



nine knots and her ability to throw streams of water was down to 2,500 gpm. She was carried on the City's inventory for several years at \$75,000, a figure that represented either wishful thinking or a conservative hint of her replacement cost. A survey found her "not in suitable condition for motor and pump replacement," and the National Board of Fire Underwriters recorded "One fireboat, of insufficient capacity, in service..."³⁹ The title of a 1958 newspaper article says it all: "Relic Fireboat Guards Riches."⁴⁰

Chief Courser and Port Director John Bate spoke forcefully to the Council in 1958 about the need for better protection of shipyards and port developments. Bate recited a list of \$30 million in property at risk, including \$14 million in baled cotton often stored at harborside, and a fishing fleet and pleasure boat inventory worth perhaps \$5 million. He emphasized that the Harbor Commission "is greatly concerned over the question of adequate floating fire protection for San Diego Bay," raising the specter of punitive insurance rates should that protection diminish. Neighborly though the Navy was, the primary duty of its six tugs was the protection of the fleet, not the city. The previous year, the Harbor Department's police force had purchased the *Point Loma*, a thirty-two-knot rescue boat with a 1,500-gpm pump for use on small boat blazes. Dismissing *Bill Kettner's* effectiveness, Bate made it clear that the *Point Loma* and *Chief Almgren* were lightweights compared with the fire protection he wanted.⁴¹

In fire engine red trim, the *Kettner* practices with her monitors in 1952. "It plowed a lot of water, with the shape of the hull," according to fireman Bob Ely. "It wasn't a fast boat but we could pump 5,000 gallons of water a minute when we got there."

*SDMM Collection, P12239B;
Robert Ely personal collection*

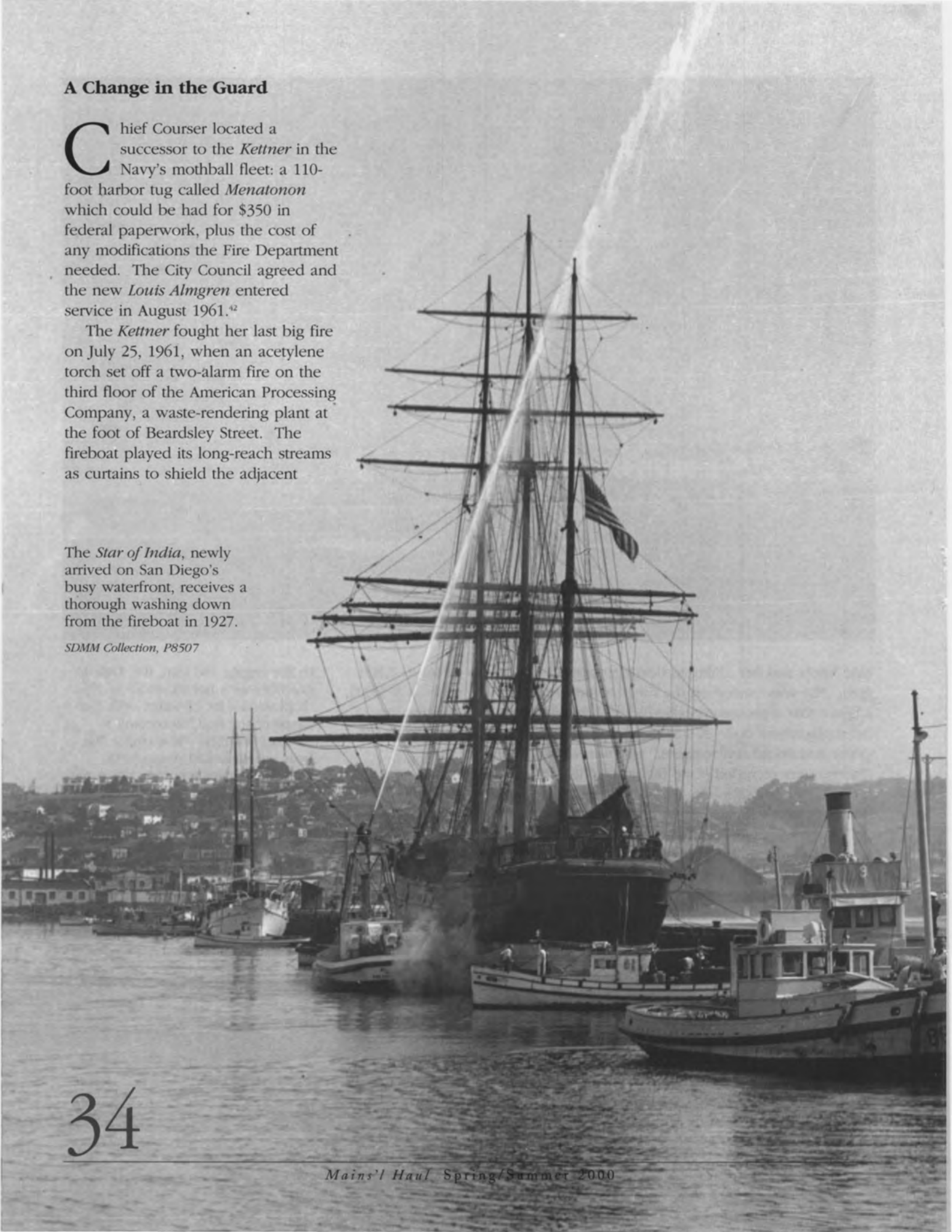
A Change in the Guard

Chief Courser located a successor to the *Kettner* in the Navy's mothball fleet: a 110-foot harbor tug called *Menatonon* which could be had for \$350 in federal paperwork, plus the cost of any modifications the Fire Department needed. The City Council agreed and the new *Louis Almgren* entered service in August 1961.⁴²

The *Kettner* fought her last big fire on July 25, 1961, when an acetylene torch set off a two-alarm fire on the third floor of the American Processing Company, a waste-rendering plant at the foot of Beardsley Street. The fireboat played its long-reach streams as curtains to shield the adjacent

The *Star of India*, newly arrived on San Diego's busy waterfront, receives a thorough washing down from the fireboat in 1927.

SDMM Collection, P8507



lumberyard, while inside, seven truck companies coped with greasy floors in subduing the blaze.⁴³

In September, the tocsin rang for *Bill Kettner* when the City Council directed the Purchasing Agent "...to advertise for sale and sell the boat hereinabove described." Fireman's daughter Bonnie Hunter Lagasse and her husband wanted to save the boat in which she had played as a girl, but the City's asking price of \$40,000 plus renovation costs, no galley or berths, and an antiquated engine capable of only nine knots sank their romantic dream.⁴⁴ *Bill Kettner* went through several owners over succeeding years, lost her fire pumps, gained a 270-hp diesel engine, and increased her tonnage from fifty-five to sixty-three. By 1980, she was the only boat registered to Neptune Fishing Company of Palo Alto.⁴⁵ Mrs. Lagasse heard a rumor some years later that "her" boat was confiscated for running drugs into San Francisco Bay and abandoned to rot on the flats.⁴⁶

Bill Kettner was born of necessity and the ingenuity of San Diego's firemen, and operated on a limited budget for forty-two years. She was visible and effective fire insurance while the port was transformed into a modern harbor, which today is virtually devoid of flammable piers and cargo sheds. Families no longer live over pilings and next to the canneries where they work, and modern fire codes, both for structures and vessels, reflect advances both in science and in community conscience. Chief Courser was right in 1958 when he told the City Council that the *Bill Kettner* was "a tired old fire horse that should have been retired a long time ago."⁴⁷ She served her city well.



N O T E S

- 1 This article was derived from "Fireboats in San Diego's Bays and Harbors," an unpublished monograph completed by the author in February 2000, which contains more extensive references and tables. Copies are in the San Diego Maritime Museum Library, the San Diego Historical Society Research Archives, and the San Diego Firehouse Museum.
- 2 *San Diego Union*, 7 Oct. 1913, p. 1.
- 3 San Diego City Council Ordinance 0-6292, 16 Aug. 1915, San Diego Public Library (hereafter cited as SDPL).
- 4 Paul Ditzel, *Fireboats* (New Albany, IN: Conway Enterprises, 1989), appendices IX and X.
- 5 Ibid., 41-42. *Bill Kettner* was San Diego's only purpose-built fireboat, later boats being converted to firefighting use or designed for multiple purposes.
- 6 Bonnie Jean Hunter Lagasse, interview, 20 February 1970, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives (hereafter cited as SDHS).
- 7 Clarence Woodson, interview by Edgar F. Hastings, 28 October 1958, SDHS; Raymond D. Dobson, interview, 21 April 1961, SDHS.
- 8 Robert Ely, interview by Robert Wright, 11 June 1996, San Diego Maritime Museum Library. Ely joined the San Diego Fire Department in 1941. Almgren assigned him to Station 6 where he also worked in the maintenance shop and crewed on the fireboat, including in WWII as a Coast Guard Chief Specialist. He rose to Battalion Chief in nine years, went on to be Master Mechanic, and retired in 1973 as an Assistant Chief.
- 9 Chief Louis Almgren, "Annual Report to Mayor, Council and Manager," 1916, 1917, SDPL.
- 10 Woodson, interview.
- 11 By 1925 she was carried on the city's books at \$24,500. Almgren, "Annual Report to Council," 1924, SDPL.
- 12 Ely, interviews by the author, 14 April, 18 April and 27 October 1999, author's collection. Ely described the engine in detail: instead of a spark plug, an igniter was bolted atop each cylinder, fired by a magneto-spark coil. Valve springs and tappets were exposed and oiled manually. Each carburetor had a vertical-slide gate valve; a camshaft that ran the entire length of the 10.5-ft. engine opened and closed ignition points in the combustion chambers on each revolution of the drive shaft. There were design and maintenance problems: cylinder heads were not removable, so igniters had to be cleaned and filed through screwed-on caps; over time spark gaps became non-standard, causing minor firing changes, off-beat timing, and substantial engine room clatter. The engine was crank-started on compressed air from a 110-volt compressor that operated on shore power until the engine started and fed air to the cylinders through a copper tubing network. Igniters were fired either from the magneto or a bank of 36-volt batteries, then the engineer disconnected shore power and started a 100-volt, 2kw Kohler light plant.
- 13 These T-head engines, Model H-6, were rated at 190 hp.
- 14 The Seagrave Company later adopted this flexibility into their product lines. Ely, interview, 11 June 1996.
- 15 As late as 1929, harbor charts show that low water at major facilities was adequate for *Bill Kettner's* draft, but the depth a few boat lengths inshore from many pier heads was two feet or less.
- 16 Woodson, interview; Ely, interview; Ditzel, 41-43. About 1930, the tower was removed in order to reduce the boat's tendency to heel over due to back-pressure from the monitor's nozzle, 26 feet above waterline. With deck monitors discharging in the same direction, the Kettner was pushed away from its target, a common problem with fireboats. The crew compensated by directing a monitor over the opposite side, and sometimes tossed grappling hooks over the rails of boats they were working on. Ely, interview, 14 April 1999.
- 17 Two of these calls were motorboats, and total time worked at alarms was 6:02 hours; she also expended three gallons of "chemical," or soda-acid/carbon dioxide. San Diego Fire Department, "Day Book," 1920, San Diego Firehouse Museum.
- 18 *San Diego Union*, 9 and 10 Dec. 1920.
- 19 This estimate of her service to the port is based upon the department's day books, the chief's annual reports to the City Council, newspapers, and oral histories. Unfortunately, there are no definitive Fire Department historical records, and day books do not specify responding companies. Four years of statistical data between 1919 and June 1933 are missing from the city's archives in San Diego's Central Library.
- 20 *San Diego Union*, 7 Nov. 1921, pp. 1 and 8.
- 21 Ibid., 27 Oct. 1929, p. 5.
- 22 Ibid., 12 Jan. 1930, p. 5. Other major fires that the Kettner worked included the Star & Crescent Pier (12 Dec. 1923), the USS *Langley* (20 Dec. 1927), and two at the Benson Lumber Company, (5 Jan. 1931 and 21 Nov. 1932). More detail and other cases are in the source monograph: see Note 1 above.
- 23 Ely, interview, and Woodson, interview.
- 24 Fire Chief, "Report to City Council," 1933-34, 1934-1935, 1938-1939 through 1941-1942, SDPL.

- 25 Fire Chief, "Report," 1941-1942, SDPL.
- 26 Parrish, "Report," 1940-41; *ibid.*, 1941-1942, SDPL.
- 27 Ely, interview, 14 April 1999; Bert L. Shankland, "CG Fireboat Responses, 15 October 1942 to 1 November 1945," 18 May 1946, SDHS. The new boat was designated CG68003F.
- 28 Ely, interview, 14 April 1999.
- 29 Shankland, "Fireboat Responses."
- 30 *Ibid.* The new boat, ex-40 *Fathom*, was designated CG60024F. CG58016F (the *Kettner*) responded to 266 calls. Fires forced 178 runs, 57 were assistance calls, with the remainder false alarms and fire protection standbys for hazardous activities. They averaged only nine calls a month, of which many were two-boat responses, a level reflecting the Navy's prevention efforts.
- 31 *Satanta's* damage control and pumps were losing the battle, so two other USN tugs lashed on port and starboard, radioed the Repair Base for a drydock, and set off hooting the danger signal. Ely and the fireboat crew quickly replaced one of the tugs and put the new eductors to work, removing flooding water at 900 gpm until *Satanta* was safely in the drydock. Ely, interview, 14 April 1999.
- 32 Shankland, "Fireboat Responses;" *San Diego Tribune-Sun*, 11 Oct. 1945.
- 33 Fire Chief, "Report," 1946-47, SDPL. Small boats caused 47 of 84 alarms, 14 of them for welding. Courser had to wait only a year for the Council to grant \$8,500 for a "police and fire patrol boat" to patrol yacht basins and boatyards in the West Bay (City Council Ord. No. 3669). The 26-ft. *Chief Almgren* made 23 mph with twin 115-hp Gray Marine engines, and was equipped with three 50-lb. carbon dioxide extinguishers and a four-cylinder high-pressure Bear fire pump that delivered 35 gpm about 80

- feet. Fire Chief, "Report," 1947-48; C.W. Anderson and C.H. Causey, "50 Years of Progress—San Diego Fire Department 1956" (San Diego: San Diego Fire Department, 1956). Courser was budgeted a fireman and an engineer for each shift, and they traded off with their mates on the *Kettner* at mid-shift. About 1949, the small boat was berthed at the San Diego Yacht Club and in 1951 was moved to the Harbor Police landing at the south end of Shelter Island. Sterling Suhre, interview by the author, 14 Dec. 1999. Also see Shankland, "Station Numbers, Changes in Locations, Appts. of Chiefs," May 1975, SDHS.
- 34 Fire Chief, "Report," 1948-49; *ibid.*, 1949-50.
- 35 *San Diego Union*, 4 Nov. 1949, pp. 1 and 3.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1951, p. 1; *ibid.*, 1 March 1951, p. 1.
- 37 Suhre, interview.
- 38 The engine overhaul was done by Bob Ely, appointed Battalion Chief/Master Mechanic in 1950. He set about changing many of the mechanical frustrations he endured as *Kettner's* engineer, converting igniters to spark plugs, replacing the magneto-coil with an impulse starter, and installing a new intake manifold. He opened the throttle valve parallel to the crankshaft, smoothed timing, and insured even oil distribution to all cylinders. No spare parts remained on the market so new pistons were turned in the shop. The out-of-true driveshaft was straightened since a full-speed run might crack it. In addition, direct pneumatic controls connected the wheelhouse to the engine. Ely, interviews with author; Suhre interview; "Bill Kettner 34 Today," *San Diego Evening Tribune* 19 Nov. 1952, B1.
- 39 Fire Chief, "Report," 1957-58.
- 40 *San Diego Evening Tribune*, 15 Feb. 1958, p. 1.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 The ex-Navy YTB-254 was built in 1944. She was undermanned by the city (crew of 4 vs. a Navy crew of 7) and overpowered for the city's needs. She drew 12.5 feet and her single screw measured 8.6 feet across. Two 635-hp diesel-electric engines powered a 1,000-hp propulsion motor capable of 15 knots. This propulsion system was not as responsive as the *Kettner's*, a dangerous shortcoming in tight situations and near small craft. She could pump 4,000 gpm at 120 psi through 4 deck monitors. Dedication brochure for Louis Almgren, Oct. 1962, SDHS; Suhre, interview.
- 43 *San Diego Union*, 26 July 1961, p. 26.
- 44 Lagasse, interview.
- 45 U.S. Coast Guard, *Merchant Vessels of the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government, 1980).
- 46 Lagasse, interview.
- 47 *San Diego Evening Tribune*, 15 Feb. 1958.

All five monitors play the air sometime in the early 1920s. The troublesome tower disappeared about 1930.

SDMM Collection, P12234B;
Robert Ely personal collection





A Sanitation Struggle at Sea: San Diego's Early Garbage Scows

Michael Buxton

Michael Buxton became interested in San Diego's early garbage scows while diving, when he discovered late 19th century ceramics and other artifacts which the scows had dumped. A former commercial diver, he is now a professional archaeologist.

In the 1880s, San Diegans turned to the ocean to solve a mounting social health problem: the disposal of their booming city's garbage. The workboats they turned to were truly unglamorous vessels, living up to the pejorative sense of the word "scow," and their story has a modern ring, complete with city contractors who cut corners, the problems of urban growth, "not-in-my-backyard" struggles between citizens and government, and tussles between state and local agencies over some of San Diego's first pollution problems.¹

The 1880s brought massive numbers of people to San Diego. By mid-1887, people were arriving at the rate of over five thousand per month.² Consequently, the existing dumps were filled. After exploring other options, Dr. T.L. Magee, secretary of the City Health Department, recommended to the City Council in April 1887 that trash be hauled to sea aboard a barge and dumped overboard.³ The City liked the idea, and J.L. Paulsen, owner of a small boathouse, had a barge ready nine months



later. The City hired Captain J.D. Barton to tow this scow with a small tugboat, at the rate of \$60 per month.⁴ Two weeks later, Captain Barton reported to the City that the new scow was working “nicely,” but that the hatches were inadequate. He felt that the trip out to the dump site took far too long—one full day—and that the cost of the tugboat, at \$40 per day, was too high.⁵

Captain Barton was a busy man. From July to September 1888, he made fifty-three trips, dumping 2,154 tons of garbage. In addition, his scow dumped seventy tons of condemned meat, along with the carcasses of 125 horses, 165 dogs, fifteen cats, twelve cows and three goats.⁶

Although Barton was required to tow his scow clear of Point Loma, in July 1889 it was discovered that he had been dumping his load near Ballast Point, considerably shortening his trip.⁷ The tides washed some of this refuse back into San Diego Bay, attracting the attention of the State Harbor Commission. In an attempt to discourage this practice, the Commission immediately passed regulations prohibiting the dumping of refuse into the Bay, worrying that tin cans and other metal containers would create an artificial reef, hindering harbor navigation.⁸

Premature dumping was not the only problem with the marine disposal of garbage; rubbish from around the city was collected and carted to a wharf at the foot of H Street, now Market Street.⁹ There, piled to await loading on board the scow, it would go foul, making the wharf both unsightly and offensive to the nose.¹⁰

This combination of factors led to hot political controversy, pitting the State Harbor Commission against local government. Bickering began

An 1890s view of San Diego's waterfront from atop the Spreckels wharf, where employees endured the smells of the city's garbage scow operations. At left stands the Jorres wharf, from which *Utilissimo* made her maiden voyage.

SDMM Collection P7177

over the best location for the obnoxious wharf. The Commissioners wanted the refuse loaded from a pier at the foot of 9th Street; the City preferred a spot farther east. The City Health Officer, Dr. D. Gochenauer, felt that a new, larger scow would solve all these problems; greater carrying capacity would eliminate the need for garbage to sit on the wharf, rotting, while with fewer trips necessary, the crew would have more time to take their load farther offshore. And the new scow would be rigged with sails, saving money in towing expenses. The City agreed, and authorized construction of a new scow on August 17, 1889.¹¹

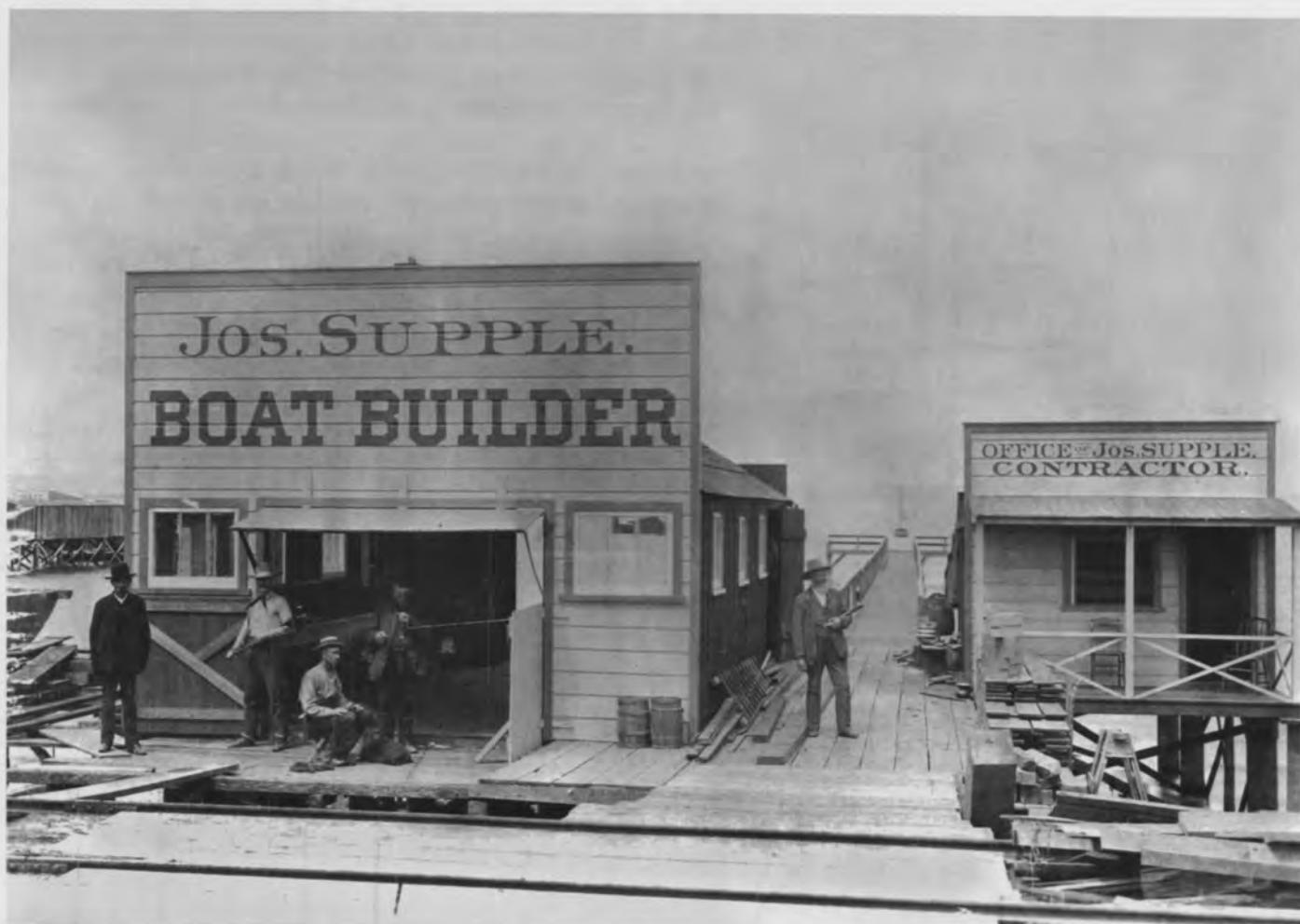
The Harbor Commission, however, disagreed, and threatened legal action, claiming that so much trash had spilled off the H Street wharf that the water nearby had "shallowed by four or five feet."¹² They also found the tug unseaworthy, and that Captain Barton had continued to jettison his cargo near Ballast Point, despite regulations. Dr. Gochenauer, in an effort to sway the commissioners, attended their next meeting and explained how the new scow would solve these problems. He also promised to extend the wharf, and to build a bunker to contain the refuse. The commissioners granted the City permission to use the wharf for another six months.¹³

On August 1, 1889, Joseph Supple submitted the sole bid to build a new sailing scow, in the amount of \$2,000.¹⁴ Supple owned a boathouse at the foot of D Street, now Broadway, and in sixty days, the vessel was ready. She was a flush-decked schooner sixty feet long, with a twenty-foot beam, and equipped with V-shaped cargo holds designed to quickly and easily dump her load. She drew eight feet, and her bottom was sheathed with copper to protect the hull from worms. Supple would be captain of the new scow, the grandly-named *Utilissimo*.¹⁵

Her maiden voyage took place on October 24, 1889, from the Jorres wharf at the foot of F Street. Dr. Gochenauer, captain for the day, had personally invited the Ladies' Annex on board—doubtlessly the sweetest smelling, most elegant cargo the scow would ever carry. The trip did not occur without a few minor problems. While sailing out of the harbor, another sailboat cut across her bow, lost wind and had to be fended off; one gentleman managed to fall into the cargo hold, much to the amusement of those on board, and had to be helped out. After the excursion, the scow was christened with a bottle of prizewinning wine by Mrs. Hill, president of the Annex, and there were speeches by Mayor Gunn, Dr. Gochenauer, Captain Friend and Mr. Callen. The event ended with everyone singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee."¹⁶ By November 1889, Dr. Gochenauer reported that the scow had made four or five trips, and was sailing two miles farther offshore than the old scow had gone.¹⁷

The City contracted G. Jouvneay to make the necessary H Street wharf improvements and build the garbage bunker. The alterations were ineffective; two months after the work was complete, the wharf was declared unsafe, and closed. The City authorized the use of the wharf at the foot of what is now Pacific Coast Highway, adjacent to the H Street wharf owned by J.D. Spreckels, soon to become a prominent and influential local citizen.¹⁸

The scow operated from the Spreckels wharf from December 12, 1889



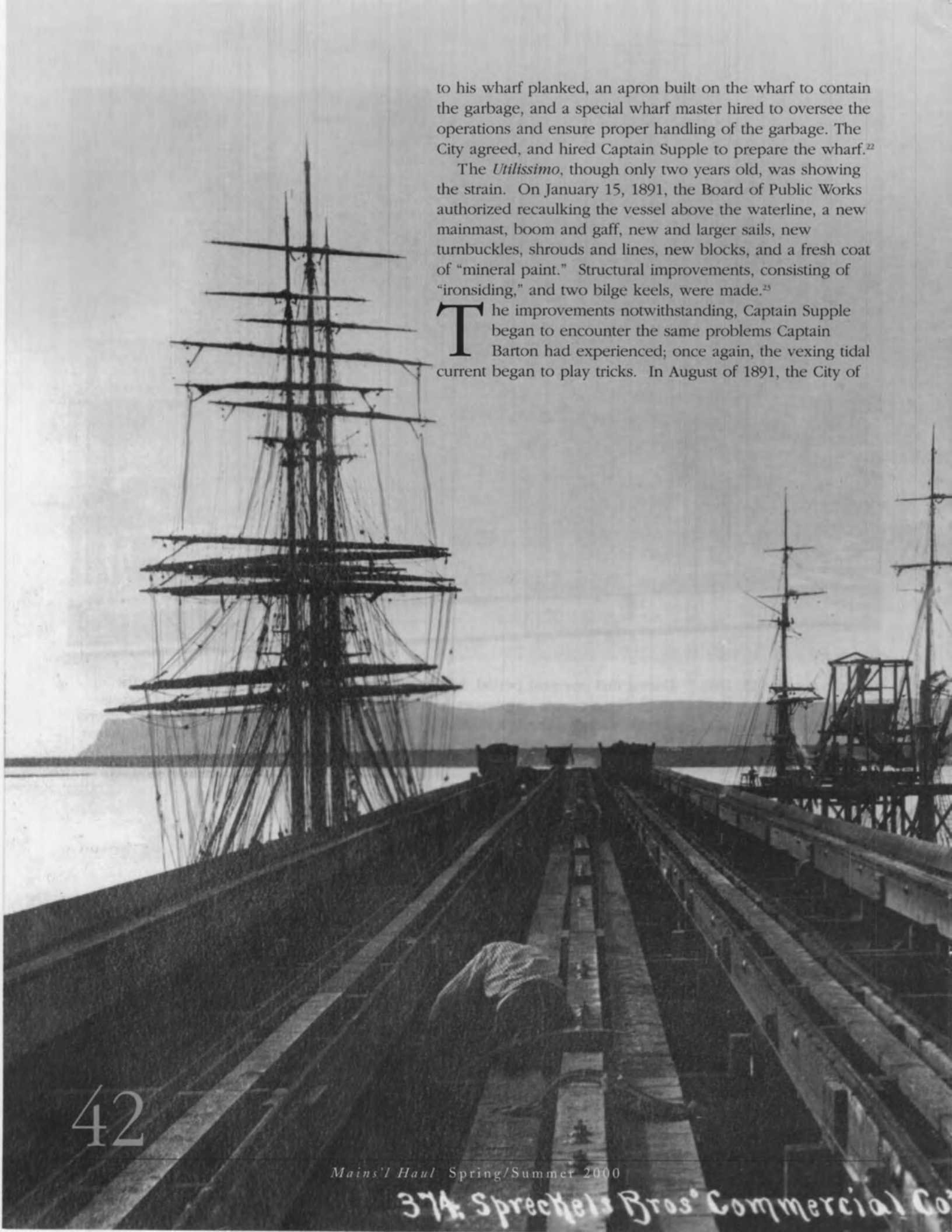
through January 15, 1891.¹⁹ During that one-year period, however, the Spreckels Company claimed that at least twenty employees had become sick as a result of working near the garbage, and that "sailors in all parts of the world" spoke unfavorably of San Diego because of the unpleasant odor.²⁰

In March 1890, the City introduced a possible solution to this garbage wharf problem, proposing that a structure be built at the foot of Hawthorn Street to stow the garbage. An elevated tank, filled with seawater and equipped with a hose, would be used to spray the facility. Seawater, a "natural disinfectant," would wash the smell away.²¹ The Spreckels Company liked the idea; area residents and other citizens, however, felt differently. On March 11, 1890, concerned citizens headed by Alonzo Horton converged on the Harbor Commission's office for a meeting. The commissioners, responding to public pressure, passed a resolution ordering the wharf moved to the foot of 9th Street. The City refused to comply, and Spreckels's employees spent a long, smelly year until a solution was offered upon which the Harbor Commission, the City and residents could all agree. William Jorres, proprietor of Jorres & Son, who serviced visiting ships with supplies and water, offered the use of his wharf at the foot of F Street for \$50 per month.

Jorres attached three conditions to his offer: he wanted the approach

Looking rather dapper for the builder and captain of a garbage scow, Joseph Supple stands second from left in this 1880s photo taken at the foot of E Street.

San Diego Historical Society Photograph Collection



to his wharf planked, an apron built on the wharf to contain the garbage, and a special wharf master hired to oversee the operations and ensure proper handling of the garbage. The City agreed, and hired Captain Supple to prepare the wharf.²²

The *Utilissimo*, though only two years old, was showing the strain. On January 15, 1891, the Board of Public Works authorized recaulking the vessel above the waterline, a new mainmast, boom and gaff, new and larger sails, new turnbuckles, shrouds and lines, new blocks, and a fresh coat of "mineral paint." Structural improvements, consisting of "ironsiding," and two bilge keels, were made.²³

The improvements notwithstanding, Captain Supple began to encounter the same problems Captain Barton had experienced; once again, the vexing tidal current began to play tricks. In August of 1891, the City of

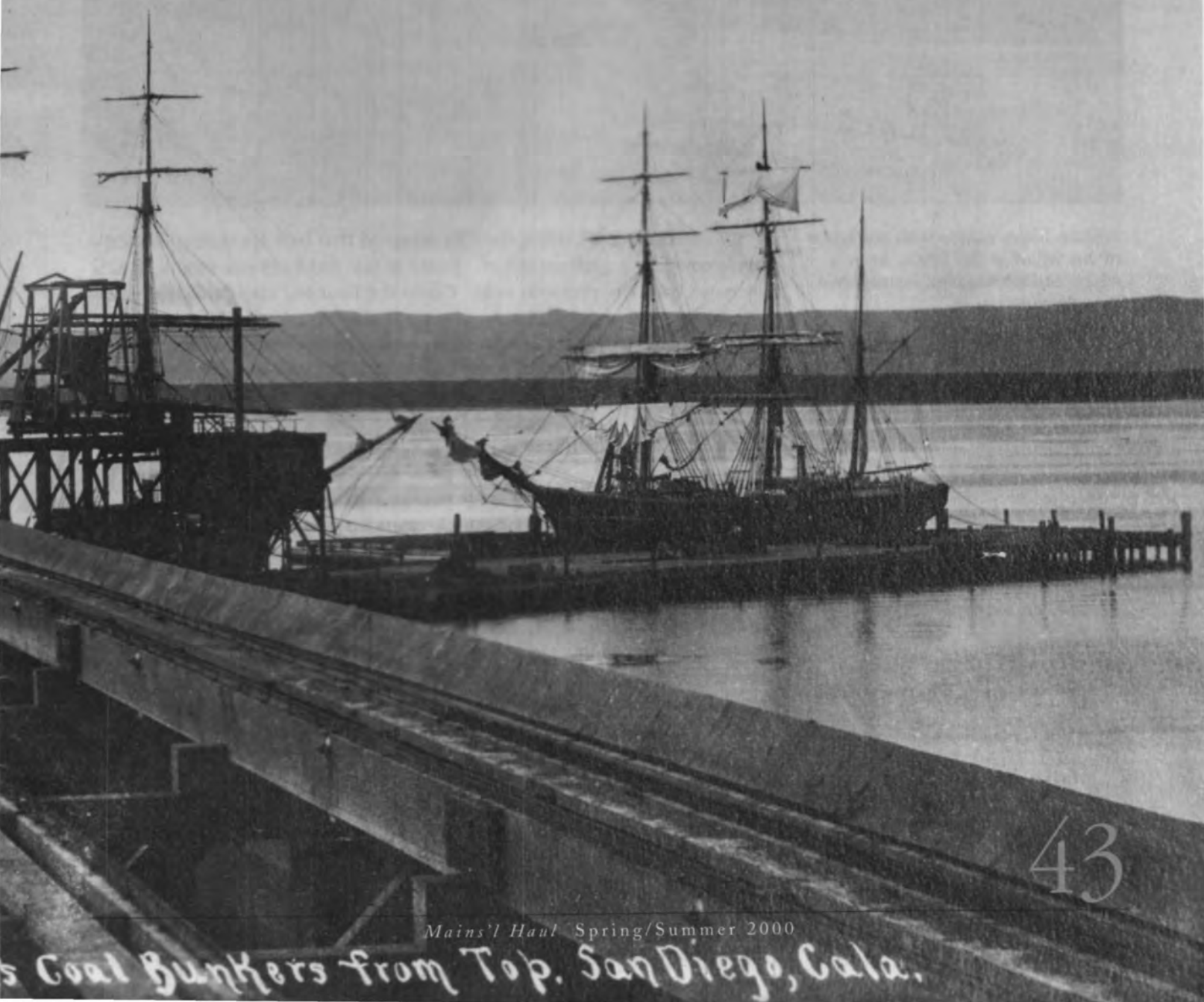
Coronado complained that trash from the scow was washing ashore and creating a public nuisance.²⁴

Sometimes a single trip could take two or three days, forcing Supple to tolerate living and sleeping on board what was basically a floating dumpster. The City began to fine the captain \$10 each time he expelled his cargo too close to shore, against which he argued that he could do nothing about "tides and winds," and resigned.²⁵ Supple, who had lost everything when the local land boom of the 1880s collapsed, moved to Portland, Oregon and became a successful builder of river steamers and freighters.²⁶

On April 12, 1892, the City gave the command of the scow to Jorres & Son, who offered to tow or sail her to sea once a week for \$200 per month.²⁷ For approximately three years, the *Utilissimo* was towed to sea with few problems by the first steam vessel constructed in San Diego, the fifty foot, eighteen-ton 1881 tugboat *Emma*.²⁸

If the breeze was blowing from the northwest when this 1896 photo was taken from atop the Spreckels wharf, looking toward Point Loma, the aroma can hardly have been pleasant.

*San Diego Historical Society
Photograph Collection*





William Jorres stands with workmen by his wharf in the 1890s, from which *Utilissimo* sailed bearing San Diego's garbage.

SDMM Collection, P2728

On December 27, 1894, the City received two bids for sailing the scow and providing a garbage wharf. Jorres & Son bid \$225 per month, a \$25 increase from the previous year. Given the financial turbulence sweeping the nation during the 1890s, however, the City accepted a \$160 bid from J.E. Harris instead, but failed to consider the political implications: Harris planned to build his wharf at the foot of Beech Street in the heart of downtown.

Almost immediately after Harris was awarded his contract, residents in the Beech Street area began organizing opposition, circulating a petition that drew 450 signatures. On December 30, Mayor Billy Carlson—San Diego's youngest mayor, at twenty-one—called a special session of the City Council, attended by many citizens vehemently opposed to the plan. Mr. Harris stated that he planned to build a two hundred-foot-long wharf and transfer garbage to the *Utilissimo*, anchored off D Street, via a flat-bottomed skiff. To keep garbage from going foul on the wharf, the small boat would make at least three trips to the scow each day. Citizens, however, worried that prevailing westerly winds would waft unpleasant odors over the residential portions of the city, and the Council agreed; the meeting ended with the Council ordering a halt to the construction of the wharf while the matter was investigated further.²⁹

It was subsequently learned that Harris had received verbal permission only to load "small boats and scows" from the intended wharf, making no mention that he planned to handle the city's garbage. The commissioners stated that they would not allow a garbage wharf north of

the Jorres wharf, and voided Harris's contract on January 3, 1895. Harris protested that he had acted in good faith, and did not want to be called "a liar and a thief." He had already started building the wharf, and stated that he was out \$400 in construction costs. The City countered with a \$250 offer, stipulating that it take possession of the wharf and all unused lumber.³⁰ Harris, who ultimately accepted this offer, died in 1903, shot during a dispute over a pile of split wood downtown.³¹

After the Harris plan was stopped, Jorres was contracted to tow the scow for thirty days, while politicians searched for a solution to the persistent garbage problem. On January 18, 1895, Jorres reported that repairs would be necessary in order to load garbage from his wharf, and that he would not make those repairs unless he was awarded the 1895 contract. The City complied, and, once again, the *Utilissimo* went to sea on the after end of the *Emma*'s towline.

On July 25, 1895, J.D. Spreckels was out yachting and witnessed the scow dumping its load off Ballast Point, causing refuse and dead animals to wash ashore.³² He reported this to the mayor, and one month later, the City passed an ordinance that provided for a hefty \$40 fine each time Jorres released his cargo too close to shore. It also required that the scow only dump during daylight hours so that officials could monitor where Jorres had been dumping.³³

No photos of *Utilissimo* exist, but San Diego's only scow schooner doubtlessly resembled the 1891 *Alma*, one of hundreds of these vessels that plied San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento River Delta. The *Alma* still sails at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

San Francisco Maritime NHP



Spreckels complained again the following year, this time about the “number of dead animals that are allowed to remain in an advanced state of decomposition” on the wharf, a problem severe enough for Spreckels to threaten legal action.³⁴ The City answered the complaint by authorizing the purchase of a barrel of chloride of lime to disinfect the scow after each trip. Also, for \$25, three hundred pounds of “Bannermans Phenyle” was purchased for the same purpose.³⁵

In 1897, Jorres was contracted to tow the scow twice per week, for an additional \$100 per month.³⁶ It was hoped that more frequent trips would keep the garbage from becoming rancid on the wharf. During that year, it was proposed that two new gasoline-powered scows be built, to make alternating trips; one would load while the other dumped offshore.³⁷ Many felt that the garbage scow idea was simply not efficient, and preferred that an incinerator be built instead. The City Council had received letters from other cities recommending the “Dixon crematory” as an alternative to dumping at sea. Councilmembers traveled to Los Angeles to view that city’s facility, and plans for construction of one in San Diego were made.³⁸

On November 15, 1897, the incinerator was ready, and three days later Jorres was instructed to stow the scow and its gear until further notice.³⁹ On May 12, 1898, City Ordinance 518 authorized selling the scow at auction, for cash, to the highest bidder. One week later, Jorres purchased the scow for only \$30, then submitted a bill for storing the vessel, which, at \$5 per month, came to exactly \$30. In June, the City paid Jorres, giving him the scow for the price of storing it.⁴⁰

And what did William Jorres do with his \$30 garbage scow? The *San Diego Union* reported that the *Utilissimo* was to be “broken up and used for fuel,” instead of meeting her end at sea like the cargoes she hauled.⁴¹

Though San Diego’s attempt to use the ocean to solve its garbage problem failed, the archaeological record indicates that dumping at sea continued. Today, with certain restrictions, vessels are still allowed to dump at sea, providing they are at least fifty miles from the nearest land. The local currents, in their timeless manner, still occasionally wash refuse ashore, periodically reviving an ocean dumping controversy that refuses to go away.

NOTES

- 1 Webster’s Dictionary defines a scow (def.3) as an old or clumsy boat; hulk; tub.
- 2 Elizabeth C. MacPhail, *The Story of New San Diego and of its Founder Alonzo E. Horton* (San Diego: San Diego Historical Society, 1979), 72.
- 3 “The City’s Garbage,” *San Diego Union*, 7 April 1887, p. 3. The refuse problem grew so severe that the Health Officer tried impregnating the ground around the dumpsites with crude oil, then igniting the area.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 11 Jan 1888, p. 2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 25 Jan 1888, p. 5.
- 6 City of San Diego Board of Health, “First Annual Report of the Board of Health of the City of San Diego for the Year Ending December 31, 1888,” MSS353, folder 1, San Diego Historical Society Research Archives (Hereafter SDHS).
- 7 “The Harbor Commissioners,” *San Diego Union*, 4 July 1889.

- 8 Ibid., 4 Jul 1889; *ibid.*, "A New Channel," 7 Sept. 1889, p. 6.
- 9 Ibid., "Sanitary Matters," 18 July 1888, p. 5.
- 10 Ibid., 28 Feb 1890, p. 5.
- 11 Ibid., "The Garbage Scow," 20 Aug. 1889, p. 5.
- 12 Ibid., "That Garbage Scow," 5 Sept. 1889, p. 2.
- 13 Ibid., 27 Sept. 1889, p. 8; City of San Diego Board of Public Works, "Minutes of the Board of Public Works," 5 Sept. 1889, vol. 1, R1-9, 92, SDHS.
- 14 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 1 Aug. 1889, vol. 1, p. 66.
- 15 "San Diego City Register," 1889; "A Boatful of Beauty," San Diego Union, 25 Oct. 1889, p. 2; "Minutes," 10 Oct. 1889, vol. 1; Herbert C. Hensley, "A Small Yachting Party" (unpublished MSS, n.d.), California Collection, San Diego Public Library, 2; Jerry MacMullen, *They Came by Sea* (San Diego: Maritime Museum Association of San Diego, 1988), 42.
- 16 San Diego Union, 25 Oct. 1889, 2; Hensley, "Yachting," 3.
- 17 Ibid., "May as Well Sell It," 6 Nov. 1889, p. 8. The subject of selling the scow had come up at a City Council meeting the previous day.
- 18 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 12 Dec. 1889, vol. 1, 144.
- 19 Ibid., 144; *ibid.*, 15 Jan. 1891, vol. 1, 292-293.
- 20 San Diego Union, 28 Feb. 1890, p. 5.
- 21 Ibid., "The City's Garbage," 1 Mar. 1890, p. 6.
- 22 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 15 Jan. 1891, vol. 1, 292-293.
- 23 Ibid., 9 Apr. 1891, p. 320.
- 24 L.P. Ames was hired to assume the role of garbage wharf master, for a monthly salary of \$40. "Board of Aldermen," San Diego Union, 26 Aug. 1891, p. 5.
- 25 Hensley, "Yachting," 3.
- 26 MacMullen, 42.
- 27 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 12 Apr. 1892, vol. 1, 414.
- 28 MacMullen, 42-43. In July 1883, a dead horse and other refuse washed ashore at La Playa, and Jorres was accused of dumping his load inside the Bay. An investigation, however, found that the horse had been hit by a train and had never been loaded aboard the scow, exonerating Jorres & Son. "That Dead Horse," San Diego Union, 8 July 1893, p. 5.
- 29 "The Garbage Issue," San Diego Union, 30 Dec. 1894, p. 5.
- 30 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 3 Jan. 1895, vol. 2, 234-236; "The Garbage Nuisance," San Diego Union, 2 Jan. 1895; *ibid.*, "Garbage Disposal," 12 Jan. 1895, p. 5.
- 31 Ibid., 7 Sept. 1903.
- 32 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 25 July 1895, vol. 2, 328.
- 33 "Vetoed by the Mayor," San Diego Union, 9 Aug. 1895, p. 2.
- 34 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 30 Apr. 1896, vol. 2, 421.
- 35 Ibid., 7 May 1896, vol. 2, 425; *ibid.*, 12 Feb. 1897, vol. 3, 18.
- 36 Ibid., 21 Jan. 1897, vol. 3, 3; "Contract Awarded," San Diego Union, 23 Jan. 1897, p. 5.
- 37 "The Garbage Issue," San Diego Union, 9 Jan. 1895, p. 5; Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 27 Jan. 1898, Vol. 3, 226.
- 38 "Affairs of the City," San Diego Union, 20 Jan. 1897, p. 2.
- 39 Board of Public Works, "Minutes," 18 Nov. 1897, vol. 3, 184.
- 40 Ibid., 19 May 1898, Vol. 3, 301; San Diego Union, 20 May 1898, p. 5.
- 41 Ibid.

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A Coast Miwok mariner watches as Drake's men careen their ship.

Careening—scraping and burning away the marine growth that slowed them—was frequent for pirates and privateers, to whom most dockyards were closed but whose professions demanded swiftness. To impede shipworms and marine life, *Golden Hind* was sheathed with a double layer of tar and animal hair under deal boards coated with a mixture of tar, tallow and sulphur which could be scraped away as it deteriorated, invented by John Hawkins for tropical operations.

For stability, much of her top-hamper has been removed, and she is lashed to a captured Spanish vessel.

Detail from *A Fair and Good Bay* by Gordon Miller, premiering in the current exhibit *Pirates! In Story & History* at the San Diego Maritime Museum.

Courtesy of the artist



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"**Mains'l Haul**—An order
in tacking ship bidding
'Swing the main yards.'
To loot, steal, or 'acquire'.
—John Masefield

Maritime Museum Association Of San Diego

MAINS'L HAUL

Vol. 36, NO. 4 Fall 2000

A Journal Of Pacific Maritime History

From the Helm
Ray Ashley

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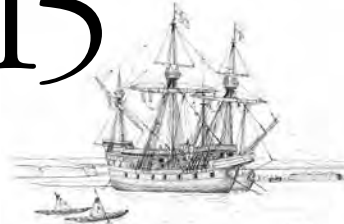
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On the cover

How fortunes were made. The *Golden Hind* captures the *Cacafuego* off South America's Pacific Coast in 1579, and with it a treasure greater than the annual income of the British Crown. In the painting on the facing page, and in this watercolor, reproduced here for the first time, Drake's ship is based on drawings by Raymond Aker featured in this issue.

Courtesy of the artist, Gordon Miller

Errata from Vol. 36:2&3

In the page 20 list of pre-1990 patrol boats, the *Shelter Island's* launching date should be 1961, and her current successor, the 1980 *Shelter Island II*, should be added. On page 27, the *Kettner's* pumps were located *forward* and were not linked, but could be individually set to maximize either pressure or volume. On page 45, *Utilissimo* differed from San Francisco Bay scow schooners in that she was almost certainly round-bottomed.

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We welcome submissions on the maritime history of the Pacific, and encourage the widest variety of perspectives on this rich heritage.
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This issue of *Mains'l Haul* is about pirates, but not about the pirates we have known so long in popular conception. *Those* pirates usually appear as fantastic figures shrouded in romance. In the maritime world we have constructed for them, they share some of the same attributes as the equally fantastical outlaws of the Old West. In their respective worlds, both pirates and outlaws lived far out on the frontiers of civilization, beyond reach of the law and the civilized society on which they preyed. Just as outlaws roamed our mythological wilderness, using the horse to grant them mobility and striking power, so did pirates roam the oceans of the world, using the sailing ship as their means of attack. Because outlaws and pirates had only themselves to depend upon, they established codes of loyalty and conduct that bound them together, in some cases

into a brotherhood more closely knit than anything to be found in "normal" society. Or so we imagine.

The exhibit *Pirates! In Story & History* currently installed aboard *Star of India* poses the question of why we find seaborne outlaws of the past so compelling. The exhibit is less about historical pirates themselves than it is about what we have made of them and how we have transformed a modest amount of information—

gleaned from a selective reading of a few texts—into a captivating myth. Alexander Esquemelin, Robert Louis Stevenson, Gilbert and Sullivan, countless Hollywood directors, and the Disney and Jim Hensen Companies are among those who have so refined our impression of who pirates were, when and where they sailed, how they acted, and what became of them that we now think of pirates as old shipmates and trusted friends. Some of them were very bad men, of course, some of

FROM THE HELM

by Ray Ashley,
Director

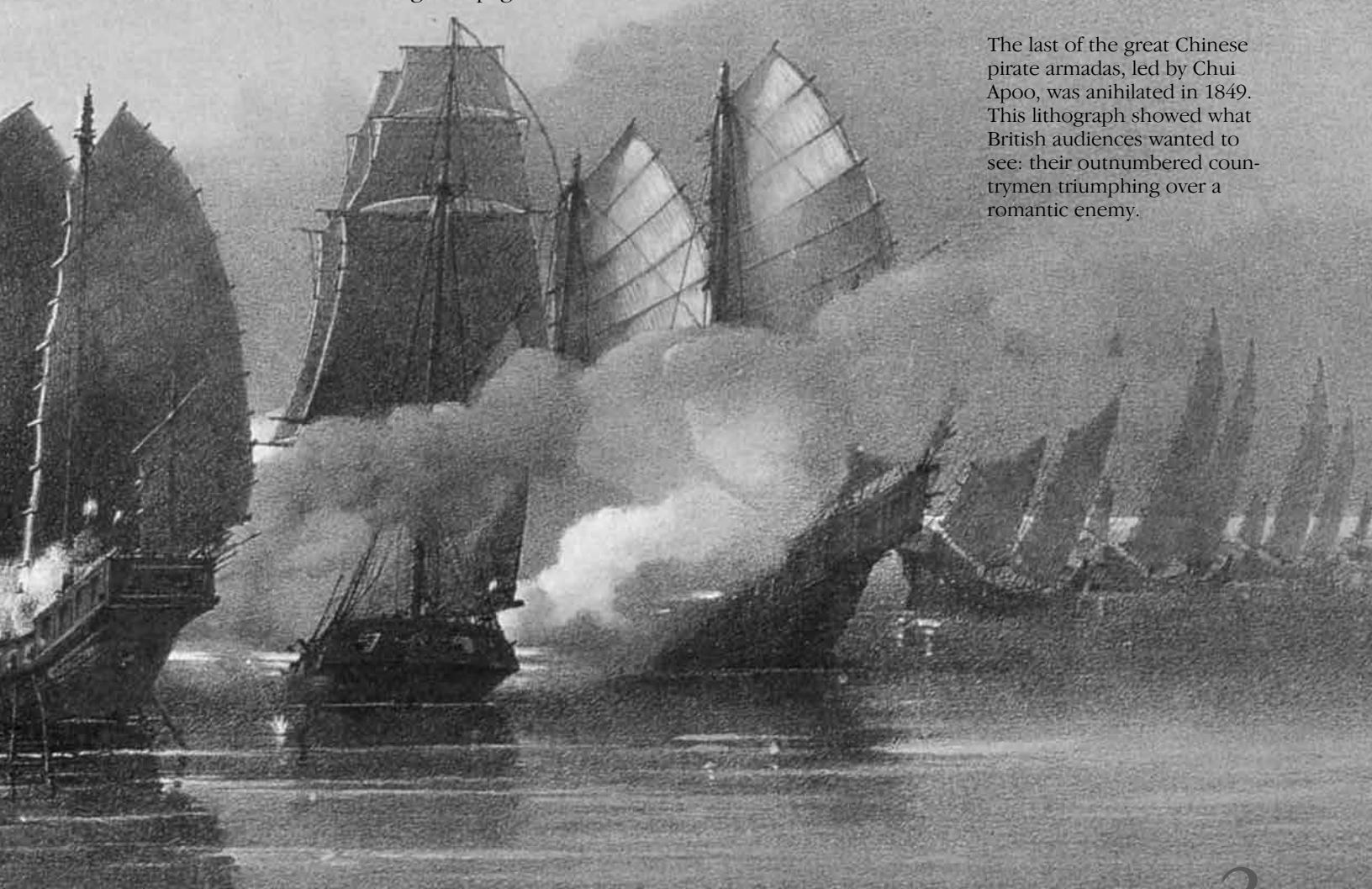


them were depraved even, but we are comfortable in their predictability. They tend, we think, to be Englishmen, to live in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to operate in the Caribbean, the Eastern Seaboard and occasionally the Indian Ocean, tend to attack Spanish ships and possessions, to despise institutional authority and revere charismatic leadership, to indulge in every vice available, and to meet an early and violent end. Also, we don't tend to hear much from their victims.

In contrast, the following articles form a set of snapshots taken of individuals who fall well outside the bounds of our expectations. We have a legal inquest into the violent seizure of a Spanish exploration vessel of the sixteenth century, reconstructions of a privateer ship which ended its career preserved as one of the world's first "museum ships," to glorify and nationalize the exploits of a man whom his enemies loathed as pirate. We read of the misadventures of a Franco/Argentine privateer-turned-pirate who attacked Spanish California, and learn of the real and imagined plights of Western

women confronted with Eastern piracy, and of the transformation of a minor historical figure into an Asian "Pirate Queen" by twentieth century authors. Finally, to put things in perspective, we see the effects of piracy in today's world and the efforts of modern seafaring nations to stamp out an activity which we often prefer to believe ended in the eighteenth century, about the time Lt. Maynard decapitated Blackbeard at Ocracoke Inlet. Pacific stories all, and none provides a familiar voyage with our customary swashbuckling friends.

So why, as the exhibit asks, do we continue to hang onto them? Perhaps one reason is because all of us at some point feel oppressed by the society we live in. Our "historical" pirates of the Golden Age broke with their own society, and allow us to sail with them beyond the limits of ours. The pirates of our imagination permit us to live, if only vicariously, free and unfettered beyond the horizon of everyday drudgery and control, on a sea of limitless possibilities.



The last of the great Chinese pirate armadas, led by Chui Apoo, was annihilated in 1849. This lithograph showed what British audiences wanted to see: their outnumbered countrymen triumphing over a romantic enemy.

Murder, Mayhem, and Discovery:

The Mutiny of Fortún Ximénez

by W. Michael Mathes

A rugged strip of the Pacific coast of Michoacán, Mexico, is called Motines—"Mutinies." This unusual place name resulted from a brutal mutiny which broke out in 1533 aboard one of the first Spanish ships to explore the region. The outcome had unintended, far-reaching implications: the incorporation of the region known as the Californias into the Spanish Empire and into the awareness of the Western World. Though the mutiny is fairly well known, this article presents excerpts of first-person accounts by its survivors, published here in English for the first time.

Background to Murder

During, and immediately following, the conquest of México in 1521, Fernando Cortés was informed of the existence of gold and silver mines, as well as pearl oyster beds, located to the west. Almost immediately, he sent out a series of expeditions in search of these potential riches.¹

In 1528 Cortés traveled to the court of King Charles V, where he received the title of Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca. As a result of his petitions, he was given two royal orders and a provision which granted him greater rights to continue his maritime enterprises. The first of these, of April 1, 1529, amplified his appointment as Captain General of New Spain to include the Pacific Ocean, and the second and third of October 27 and November 5 of the same year granted him licenses and rights to explore and colonize the coasts and islands that he would discover.²

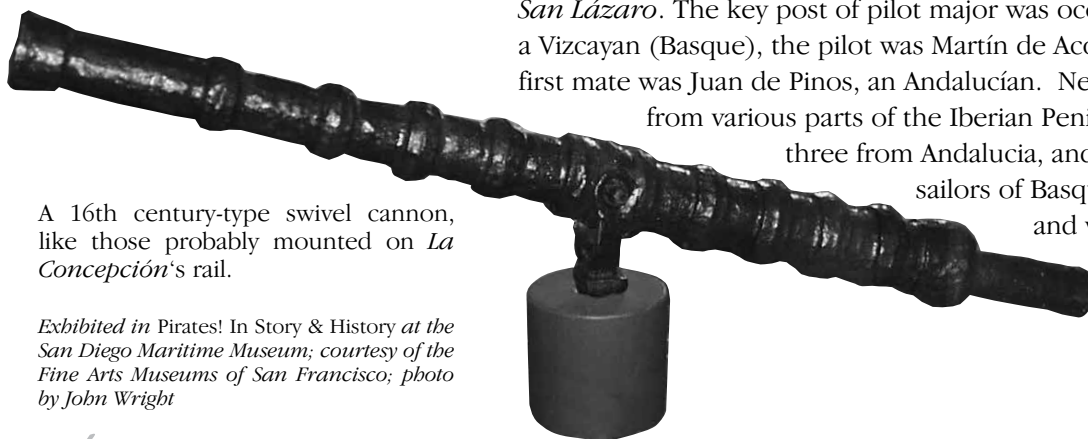
Upon returning to Mexico, Cortés intensified his maritime activities near Acapulco, and after finishing construction of two new ships, on June 13, 1532 he ordered his cousin Diego Hurtado de Mendoza to explore to the northwest. Reaching the coast of New Galicia, however, Hurtado was repulsed by Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, governor of the region and enemy of Cortés. Reports of Hurtado's apparent destruction reached Cortés, who ordered two more ships to be built in Tehuantepec to search for the lost expedition—and to seek an island rich in gold and pearls, rumored to exist for over a decade.³

Cortés gave command of the new expedition to Diego Becerra de Mendoza, a native of Mérida, as captain general aboard *La Concepción*, and named Hernando de Grijalva as captain of the *San Lázaro*. The key post of pilot major was occupied by Fortún Ximénez, a Vizcayan (Basque), the pilot was Martín de Acosta, Portuguese, while the first mate was Juan de Pinos, an Andalucían. Nearly all the sailors hailed

from various parts of the Iberian Peninsula—five from Castile, three from Andalucia, and a pair from Galicia—but

sailors of Basque origin predominated, and were represented as well

among the soldiers, storekeeper, carpenters and caulkers.⁴ Native speakers of a language far removed from Castilian Spanish and



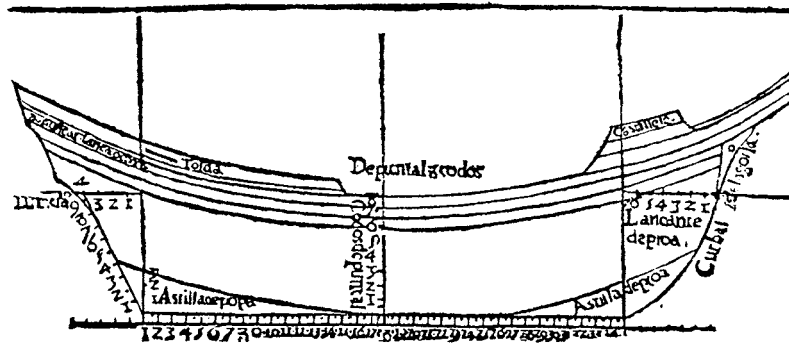
A 16th century-type swivel cannon, like those probably mounted on *La Concepción*'s rail.

Exhibited in Pirates! In Story & History at the San Diego Maritime Museum; courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; photo by John Wright

possessed of a distinctly separate cultural identity, the Basques shared an important link with Chief Pilot Ximénez.

The commander of the detachment of soldiers aboard the *Concepción* had an even more important link to the chief pilot: Pedro Ximénez was the pilot's brother.⁵ Three Franciscan friars, Fathers Martín de Jesús de La Coruña, Juan de San Miguel, and Francisco Pastrana, accompanied the expedition aboard the *Concepción*; they would be crucial players in the drama ahead.⁶

The expedition's purser, Juan de Carasa, also noted that "for the care of the sick the said Marquis had sent a pharmacist named Palacio who prepared for them valuable medicines, paying him a good sum of *ducados* for his services." Many would soon need his care, among them most of the six men whose testimony would preserve their memories of the mutiny for posterity. These were Juan de Carasa, military commander Alonso de Ulloa, treasurer Bernaldino de Hinojosa and the seamen Juan de Perero, Martín de Bocanegra and Francisco Díaz.



This woodcut shows how Spanish shipwrights in the Americas computed the proportions of a ship's hull.

From Diego García de Palacio's 1587 *Instrucción náutica*.

"They declared and deposed, individually in secret and separately, the following:"

Six of the survivors attended an inquest in the mining camp of Los Angeles in the province of Colima on December 17, 1533, less than three weeks after the mutiny. They gave their testimony, sworn "under the sign of the Cross and the four Holy Gospels," at this remote location because, according to Juan de Carasa, "I fear that because they are seriously wounded they will die in the mountains and places where they will not be easily available."

The following excerpts of testimony were spoken by the witnesses in response to a series of nineteen questions about details of the events; for example, whether they knew if Cortés himself had been involved in constructing the ships for the expedition. In the excerpts, to restore the testimony more closely to the form in which it was originally spoken, ellipses (...) replace the formal legal phrase "the said" which was added by the scribe. The full document, housed in the Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, has been published elsewhere in the original Spanish by the author.⁷

Michael Mathes is the author of numerous books and articles in English and Spanish about the region known as the Spanish Borderlands. His scholarship earned him Mexico's Orden Mexicana del Aguila Azteca, the highest honor which that nation bestows on non-citizens. We were pleased to publish his article on Francisco de Ortega's third voyage in our Fall 1999 issue.

Constructing the ships:

The two ships "for discovery of lands in the South Sea in the name of His Majesty," in Juan de Carasa's phrase, were begun on the Bay of Santiago in the province of Tehuantepec in 1532 and were completed in October 1533. Juan de Carasa testified that the Marquis del Valle, Cortés himself,

was present at the said port in person, to have the ships completed and see them sail, during which time he spent more than a year in the...port suffering

much discomfort from loneliness and the intense heat in the...port, the dust that arose, and the mosquitos, so much so that all those who were there complained of his suffering.

Francisco Díaz, a sailor born in the city of León, attested that Cortés was so committed to the project that, when visiting there, and he “received news that his wife was ill, near death, he refused to leave the...port until he could see the ships sail.” Once they were launched, Cortés returned to the mosquito-ridden shipyard and boarded the *Concepción* where, in Carasa’s words, he reviewed the expedition’s men and addressed them,



A 16th century-type crossbow.

Currently in Pirates! In Story & History; courtesy of the San Diego Museum of Man; photo by John Wright

telling them that the fleet was going in the service of His Majesty to discover lands, and he urged them greatly to keep peace and agreement among themselves, and thus turned them over to the...captain, as well as to the...chief pilot, Ortún Ximénez, and to me, ...Juan de Carasa, and the other officers and petty officers and seamen, we all took a solemn oath in his presence, swearing that we would be faithful in the said service and obey...Captain Diego Becerra, and that each one would discharge his obligations faithfully on the...voyage. After the aforesaid, when we swore loyalty to him with the affection and good will he inspired in all, embracing most of the men, he left the galleon. He spoke freely to pilot Ortún Ximénez, telling him that if God should will that they discover lands, after His Majesty and his lordship, the one who would benefit most would be he.

The *Concepción*, attested Carasa, was “very well furnished with artillery, powder, broadswords, swords, crossbows, and many other kinds of arms, and also abundant supplies and food for the sailors,” enough to last over a year and a half. She also carried spare rigging, iron, steel, a forge, and a blacksmith, Carasa reported, “so that if it became necessary at any port they discovered they could build a caravel or brig to explore.”⁸

The voyage begins: October 29, 1533

Two days after the speech by the Marquis, the ships set sail. The *Concepción*’s purser, Juan de Carasa, thought that “I was going with other Spaniards to discover lands in the South Sea,” but what began as a voyage of exploration soon became a voyage of horror.

The fleet left the...port without problems. The *San Gerónimo* [*Concepción*] reached the open sea and the other ship, *San Lázaro*, as she was leaving...port ran aground on a shoal and was unable to free itself for some time. For this reason, the...galleon waited at anchor for four or five days because, according to the instructions given by the...Marquis [Cortés] they were to sail together for mutual defense on the same course. After the said number of days, the...ship *San Lázaro* was free from the shoal or bar and joined the...galleon, signaling and following it, and they remained anchored together that day and night. The following day they set sail, taking forthwith the course that the...Marquis had given in his instructions. They sailed together six or seven hours. During the first watch in the night a storm arose and the ship *San Lázaro* was forced off course and separated from the...galleon. At about ten o’clock at night the lamp was ordered lit so that the...ship would recognize it, and with that light showing, the...galleon continued its course, sailing that entire night until the next day, and despite its light, the ship *San Lázaro* did not appear nor could it be sighted. In the morning, the captain ordered a seaman to climb to the topsail mast of the...galleon and to look everywhere to see if he could sight the...ship. The seaman

stated he could not see any ship. In view of this, the...captain ordered the galleon to sail with vigilance, waiting for the...ship, and it sailed for almost two days in this manner.

Since the...ship failed to appear, the...captain and pilot ordered the galleon to go back on the second course in keeping with the instructions. Pilot Xortún Ximénez stated that the said second course under the instructions could not be followed due to bad weather, and the galleon sailed without seeing land for some thirty days until, at last, they came within sight of land and explored the coast of Zacatula.⁹

The separation of the two ships would last for the remainder of the voyage. Whether this division was accidental, due to bad weather, or resulted from Grijalva's intentional action to withdraw from Becerra's command is unclear; the latter was later asserted by Bernal Díaz.¹⁰ Carasa continued that,

after arriving at the...coast of Zacatula as has been stated, the...galleon anchored, and they lowered the launch which carried the military commander Alonso de Ulloa, accompanied by some petty officers and seamen, to find out where they were. They said they found some native Indian interpreters there, who assured them that the pueblo of Zacatula was only five days distant. After meeting this interpreter, they returned to the galleon and the...captain, pilot, and others, and stated what the Indians had told them. Early the next morning, Thursday, the galleon sailed, planning to go to the port at Zaguatán to take on water.¹¹

Friday night, November 28, 1533

The mutiny occurred at sea, reported treasurer Bernaldino de Hinojosa, when he

and other officers were sleeping, each one in his place, confident and secure, ...Ortún Ximénez, his brother Pedro Ximénez, and other sailors, brandishing offensive and defensive weapons, suddenly rushed to where the captain was sleeping, which was at the stern of the said galleon, on top of a box, and struck him on his head and other parts of the body...

Hinojosa continued:

This witness, who was sleeping to one side of the prow, on hearing the commotion, arose instantly, startled, and tried to go where the captain was to see what the trouble was. On his way he met, next to the mast, Master Miguel, caulker, brandishing an unsheathed sword. This witness seized him quickly, but at that time there came another sailor, whose name he does not remember, who helped the said Master Miguel, and the two, together, held this witness after he struggled with them as he has stated, and pushed him against a side where they gave him many blows on his back, calling him a traitor. In the meanwhile, other sailors arrived and one of them wounded him. He does not remember their names. They slashed him on his left arm, from which he is now very ill.

According to Juan de Carasa, the uprising that broke out between eleven o'clock and midnight came completely without warning, for,

during the entire time he [the captain] was aboard the...galleon...Ortún Ximénez showed him great courtesy, honor, and good treatment both in speaking to him,

*...they beat
me again,
repeatedly
knocking me
down two or
three times,
saying "Death
to the traitors
of the sea!"*

*“Give me
your sword,
for if they
see you
carrying
it they will
kill you.”*

as well as during all the time he sailed on the...galleon he never had any quarrel or fight with him or anyone else, nor did he mistreat anyone.

Carasa testified that the attackers struck while Ximénez was on watch and the captain slept,

without any thought of disturbance, without offensive or defensive weapons, undressed to his shirt, and they attacked him with broadswords, swords, daggers, arrows, and other weapons, and slashed him on his head so much that his brains came out, and gave him other stabs in his right arm and a wound in his thigh so that they tumbled him from the chest upon which he was laying and left him for dead, however, on the deck as he was, they chained him with irons on his feet. The...captain, finding himself wounded and lifeless, asked for confession.¹²

Ximénez and his mutineers, continued Carasa, carrying swords, broadswords, and shields,

stabbed and wounded the other officers as they lay in their beds, undressed and completely unarmed. They gave military commander Alonso de Ulloa fourteen cuts on his arms, hands, and other parts of his body, as a result of which it is expected that he will be crippled, and left him for dead, and, in fact, they would have killed him had it not been for the [Franciscan] fathers. They wounded likewise...Bernaldino de Hinojosa, and I, ...Juan de Carasa, received many broadsword blows, and a bad blow on the head which brought me to the ground, and, stunned as I was, I got up and tried to go to the stern, and they beat me again, repeatedly knocking me down two or three times, saying “Death to the traitors of the sea!” But God miraculously saved me. They seized me and tied my hands, and I remained heavily chained for many days. They also wounded petty officer Francisco Díaz on his left hand, from which it is feared he will remain crippled. They also stabbed him on his nose and head. They also wounded...Martín de Bocanegra and Juano, a foreigner, the crown of whose head was penetrated by a slash. If the fathers had not intervened none of us would have escaped with our lives, for there were many polls and opinions among them [the mutineers], asking that we all be killed and cast into the sea, or at least on some uninhabited islands where no one would ever hear from us.

The seaman Martín de Bocanegra, a native of Sevilla, testified that when the mutineers rose, he

was sleeping on the...galleon on deck at the stern, close to where the captain was sleeping, and when this witness awakened from his sleep they had already given him three knife wounds on his head. And, as he found himself wounded and maimed, not knowing what was about, he went to the stern without hiding, and there they gave him two more knife wounds. Simultaneously, he saw the captain, who had been sleeping on top of a chest, stretched out on the deck face down and badly wounded, thought to be dead, and many threatening swords, and [heard] shouting: “Death, death to them, and long live the King, and Señor Ortún Ximénez!”

Petty officer Francisco Díaz reported that at that moment, he himself

was asleep on mid-deck, leaning against a sail bonnet. He was attacked in his sleep by the three men who inflicted four knife wounds on him, as follows: two slashes in his hand and left arm, and one each on his head and nose, from which wounds he was presently ill and fears he will remain maimed. When he was wounded on the hand as he stated, he wrestled with one of the men who

had wounded him, and holding each other as they did, they rolled to the side near the water, and at that moment two other sailors, partisans of the said Ortún Ximénez, came and grabbed this witness and tied his hands with a cord over the wounds they had inflicted upon him. At this time he was able to go below and heard the said pilot shout, "Where is this Francisco Díaz? Kill him!" Father Fray Juan replied, "He is already dead, what do you want of him?" A short time later, the fleet pharmacist, Francisco de Palazuelos, came to dress his wounds. He told him that Captain Alonso de Ulloa and Bocanegra were seriously wounded. The following day, this witness and the others who favored the ...Marquis were chained around their necks, wounded as they were. Juan de Carasa and other persons were handcuffed.

The seaman Juan de Perero testified that when he heard the noise,

half dazed by sleep he got up and heard them shout toward the stern: "Death, death to the traitors!" Not suspecting that there was such a mutiny, this witness went up, sword in hand, to the place where the shouting and disturbance were going on. When he reached the top he saw more than twenty unsheathed swords. At this juncture a sailor named Juan del Puerto approached this witness saying: "Give me your sword, because if they see you carrying it they will kill you." The pilot Ortún Ximénez came to this witness, and placing a bare sword in his hand, asked me whom I was for, and this witness replied that he was for the King, and then Ortún ordered his hands tied to his back, and thus tied they took him to the top deck astern.

His head wounded and bleeding, Juan de Carasa was thrown down a hatch, where Juan de Perero helped nurse him. Perero soon learned that their survival was by no means assured, for he "heard many sailors who brought their food say that if it had not been for the priests, they would have killed them all with sword thrusts, or at least they would have cut their feet or hands." Juan de Perero continued:

This witness being tied up, and, as the cord was cutting his hands, he asked a Juan de Ochoa, for the love of God, to loosen the cord for it was cutting his hands. He replied that I should be quiet because I had not gotten what I deserved, and so I remained tied up until the following day when I was shackled.

Military commander Alonso de Ulloa recalled escaping death by a ruse:

When this witness heard this outcry, he pretended that he was dead and he believes that because they saw him with so many wounds and in such a deplorable state, they left him for dead. They even looked at his face by candlelight and raised him by his left arm, and still thinking he was dead, they said he should be cast into the sea. At this moment Father Fray Martín de la Coruña came where this witness was stretched out on the deck and spoke to this witness. When...Ortún Ximénez found he was alive, he ordered his hands tied, wounded as he was. His wounds were dressed by the pharmacist of the ship, and this done, he was ordered taken below decks.

When Ulloa's testimony was written down and handed back for his signature, the scribe noted that he "did not sign because he was unable to do so because he was wounded in his right hand..."

"Before we began to heal from our wounds, we were all imprisoned with chains, handcuffs, and leg irons," Carasa testified. Francisco Díaz recalled that their captivity gave the Chief Pilot and his men considerable pleasure, for,



“Death,
death to
them!—and
long live the
King and
Señor Ortún
Ximénez!”

A 16th century wheel-
lock pistol.

*Exhibited in Pirates! In
Story & History; courtesy of
Sean E. Rich*



thus imprisoned, he heard the sailors boast of how they had seized and wounded them, and that they were thinking of casting them into the sea, cutting off their feet and noses, and due to the entreating of the fathers, they abandoned this in the manner which he related. He heard Father Fray Martín say he had heard that they wanted to kill them, and that he had begged on his knees so that they would cease causing more harm. And this witness believes they were saved through his pleading.

The Death of Diego de Beccara and Election of a New Captain: December 1-2, 1533

The Captain lingered for three days, suffering greatly. After he died, Bernaldino de Hinojosa testified that he watched,

on a Monday at sunrise when they brought out the body of Captain Diego Becerra from the chamber of the said Pilot Ortún Ximénez, and saw ballast brought up to wrap with it so that its weight would sink it to the bottom, and heard the splash on the sea when they threw it overboard.

The day after the Captain's burial was the feast day of Saint Andrew. Ximénez assembled all of the ship's company, and, in Juan de Carasa's words,

addressed them in a loud voice, telling them that he wanted to be the captain of the galleon and to command, therefore, they would swear that they took him as their captain and would obey him in whatever he might order. The...seamen gave him the said oath. From that time, he proclaimed himself the captain and forthwith named his brother, Pedro Ximénez, as master of the...galleon, and... Juan de los Pinos as chief pilot. He disarmed everyone except certain Basques from Vizcaya who were allowed to keep their machetes, and had the arms kept in a box.

The Chief Pilot's rise to captain placed another of the ship's innocent officers in a difficult position. When Ximénez shouted for First Mate Juan de los Pinos, Juan de Perero witnessed him "answer the call trembling." The chief mutineer spoke: "Juan de los Pinos, do not be afraid, if you want my post as chief pilot, you can have it." Juan de los Pinos answered: 'Yes sir.', "recalled Francisco Díaz. "He accepted more due to fear than to his desire," Carasa noted sympathetically.

Cast Ashore

Later on the feast day of St. Andrew, reported Carasa, the *Concepción*

raised anchor and sailed, carrying us; me, ...Juan de Carasa, as well as the... fathers and other officers and petty officers, and kept us imprisoned as previously stated, sailing along the coast for eleven days, at the end of which... Ortún Ximénez ordered the...galleon to anchor. When at anchor, he ordered the launch lowered with some articles and crossbows, and cast all of us, including the fathers, ashore on the coast...

The wounded opponents of the mutiny and the three Franciscans were

hustled into the launch, which ferried them to shore in two or three runs. Their plight seemed grim, for as Carasa reported:

Ortún did not give us any of our belongings or food or arms or anything else. We were naked, for they removed the good shirts we were wearing, and gave us in exchange others that were in worse condition. Thus, we were left on the...coast without our knowing where we were or which way to go.

Abandoned on the desolate shore of what is today Michoacan, at a spot later named Motines, the men searched for a way back to civilization:

I, ...Juan de Carasa, and Father Fray Juan started to walk down the beach with great difficulty and hunger. After walking five or six leagues [fifteen to twenty miles] we met some native Indians who served as interpreters. We were told we were in the ...pueblo limit and that...Manuel de Cáceres [the absentee administrator of the Indian pueblo of Apoztlán] was there. They led us to him and we told him of our great misfortune. Because the two other fathers, ...Alonso de Ulloa, and the other wounded man remained on the beach where we were cast away, ...Manuel de Cáceres sent for them with a Spaniard named Domingo and many Indians carrying food and supplies. These Indians helped us to reach the mines of Los Angeles where we are now.

The Aftermath

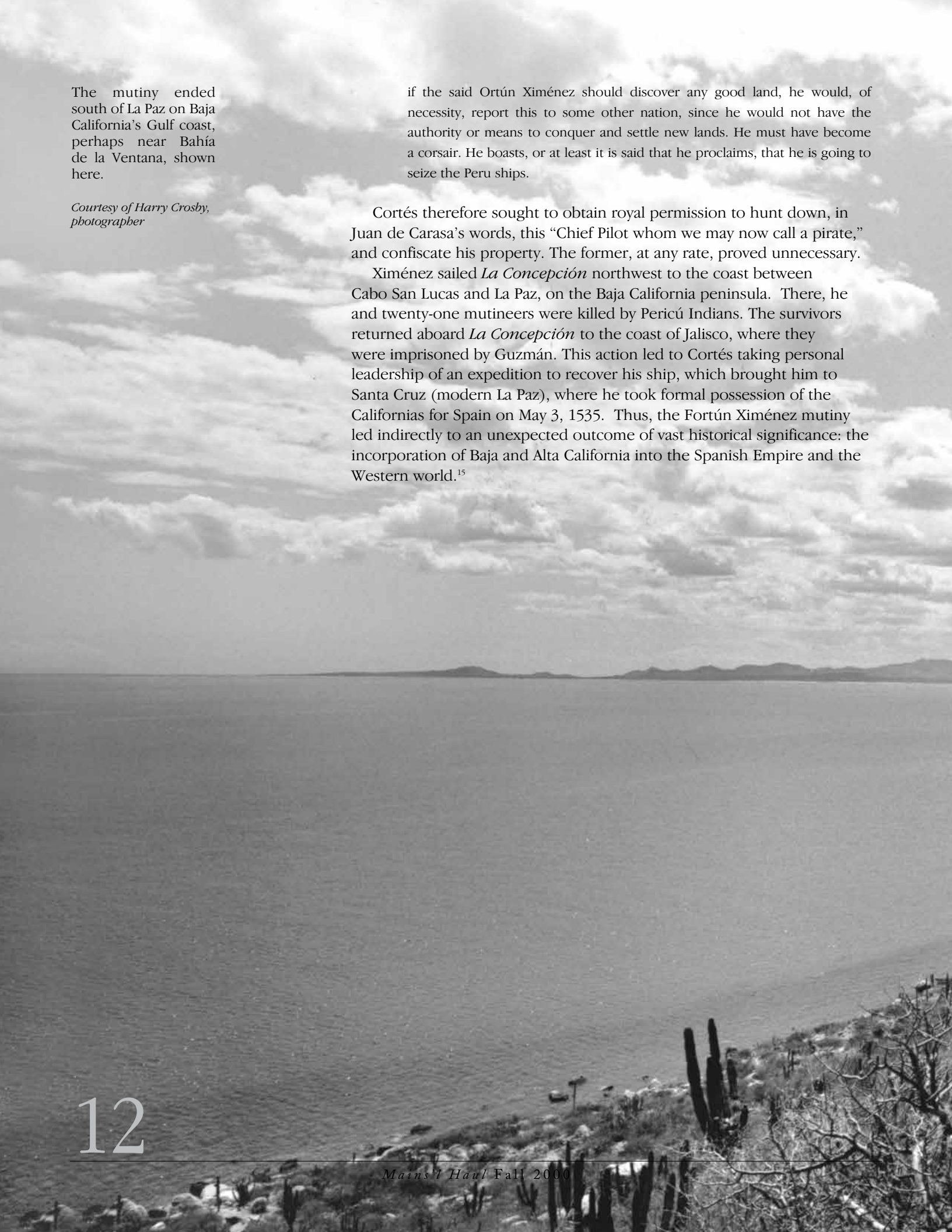
Treasurer Bernaldino de Hinojosa died of his wounds not long after his testimony. Among the survivors, only Juan de Carasa continued in the service of Cortés, participating in the expedition of 1535 together with Francisco de Hinojosa, Bernaldino's brother. Of the Franciscans, whose intercession had saved their lives, Fray Martín de Jesús de La Coruña later founded Michoacán's Franciscan province of San Pedro and San Pablo in 1565, and Fray Juan de San Miguel, a highly venerated missionary in Michoacán, founded the town of Uruapan.¹³

A month after the inquest, on January 8, 1534, Hernando de Grijalva and the *San Lázaro* returned to the Colima coast. Grijalva's voyage had been free of major incidents, save his discovery of the islands which, in the eighteenth century, would be renamed for Viceroy Revilla-Gigedo.

Why a Mutiny?

What is missing from the inquest testimony is any sense of the motive for the mutiny, for the inquest was conducted solely to establish events, not causes. Bernal Díaz later wrote that the captain was an arrogant and ill-tempered person, but no other contemporary account confirms this, and it seems a weak motive, given the nature of the times and the ship's isolation.¹⁴ Virtually the sole explanation that could justify risking crimes of the gravity of mutiny and murder of the legitimate authority would be that Ximénez and his followers imagined that, once free to chart their own course, the discovery of great wealth would be theirs. With this fortune, they may have imagined they could have purchased a pardon or protection from Fernando Cortés's arch-enemy Nuño de Guzmán.

At the inquest, Yñigo de Mondragón, speaking on behalf of Cortés, warned of the mutiny's potentially disastrous consequences;



The mutiny ended south of La Paz on Baja California's Gulf coast, perhaps near Bahía de la Ventana, shown here.

Courtesy of Harry Crosby, photographer

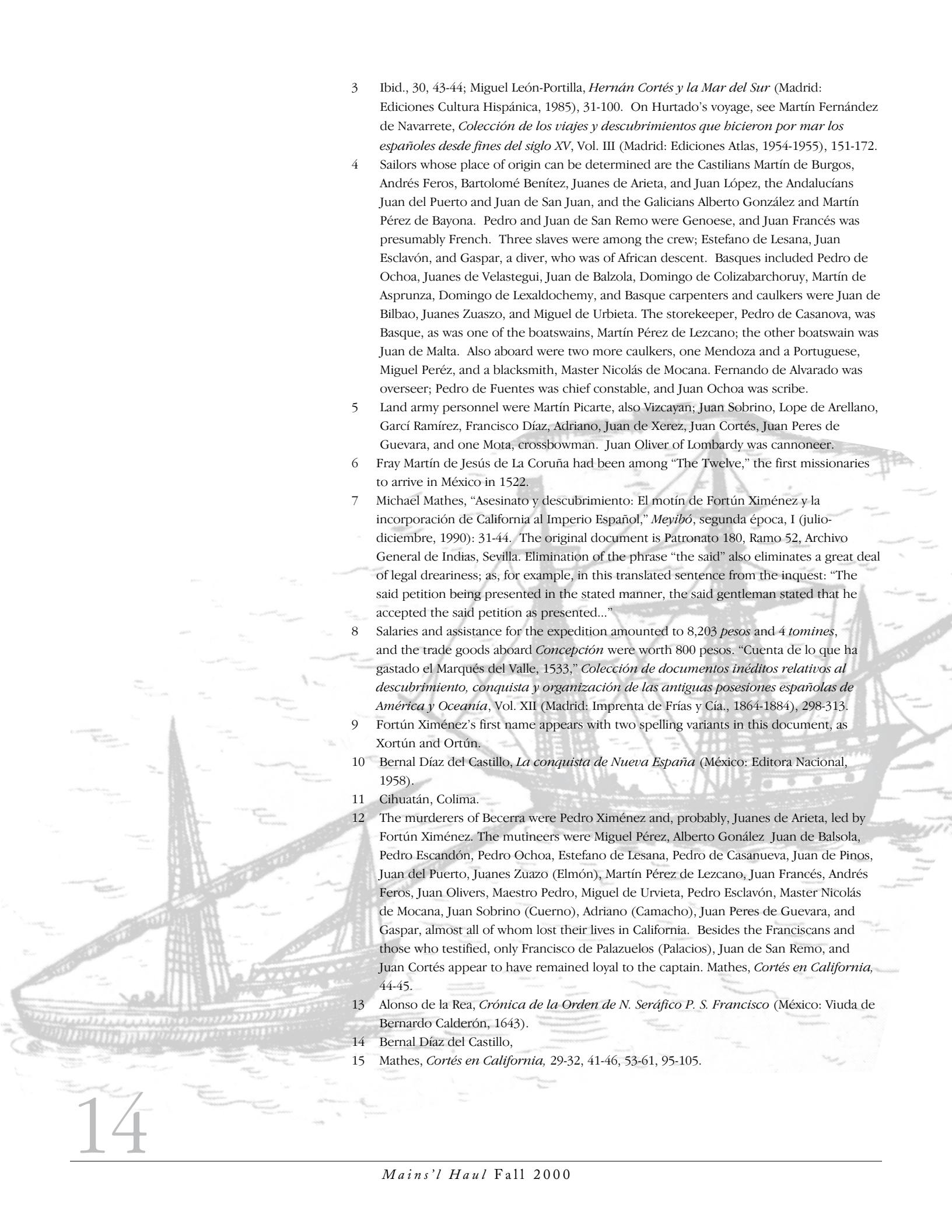
if the said Ortún Ximénez should discover any good land, he would, of necessity, report this to some other nation, since he would not have the authority or means to conquer and settle new lands. He must have become a corsair. He boasts, or at least it is said that he proclaims, that he is going to seize the Peru ships.

Cortés therefore sought to obtain royal permission to hunt down, in Juan de Carasa's words, this "Chief Pilot whom we may now call a pirate," and confiscate his property. The former, at any rate, proved unnecessary.

Ximénez sailed *La Concepción* northwest to the coast between Cabo San Lucas and La Paz, on the Baja California peninsula. There, he and twenty-one mutineers were killed by Pericú Indians. The survivors returned aboard *La Concepción* to the coast of Jalisco, where they were imprisoned by Guzmán. This action led to Cortés taking personal leadership of an expedition to recover his ship, which brought him to Santa Cruz (modern La Paz), where he took formal possession of the Californias for Spain on May 3, 1535. Thus, the Fortún Ximénez mutiny led indirectly to an unexpected outcome of vast historical significance: the incorporation of Baja and Alta California into the Spanish Empire and the Western world.¹⁵

NOTES

- 1 Cortés began in 1521 to send expeditions to the Pacific, ordering Juan de Valle to explore the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In 1522 Cristóbal de Olid entered the region of Michoacán, and Pedro Alvarez Chico explored the coast of Guerrero, all reporting that they had found no maritime passage from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific. However, they saw many ports potentially useful for maritime expansion on the Pacific, so as a result, in May 1522 Cortés, with forty blacksmiths and carpenters under Martín López, began building two brigantines and two caravels in the bay of Zacatula (Petacalco) to seek supposedly rich lands offshore. Contemporaneously, Magellan and Sebastián Elcano's 1519-1522 circumnavigation discovered the Philippines and Moluccas. Therefore, in June, 1523, Cortés was ordered to postpone explorations until a new expedition following the Magellan-Elcano route could report. This enterprise, under Jofré García de Loaysa reached the Moluccas in late 1526. In the interim, on 22 June 1526, a royal order authorized Cortés to send a fleet in search of Loaysa, who was feared lost. While Cortés prepared his ships, one of Loaysa's vessels reached the coast of Tehuantepec, giving further impetus to Pacific exploration. As a result, in July, 1527, Cortés dispatched his first maritime expedition under his cousin, Alvaro Saavedra Cerón, which was lost in the Moluccas, with survivors not reaching Spain until 1534.
- 2 W. Michael Mathes, *Cortés en California 1535* (Mexicali: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 1978), 16-20, 41-44, 80-81, 84-94.

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- 3 Ibid., 30, 43-44; Miguel León-Portilla, *Hernán Cortés y la Mar del Sur* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1985), 31-100. On Hurtado's voyage, see Martín Fernández de Navarrete, *Colección de los viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles desde fines del siglo XV*, Vol. III (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1954-1955), 151-172.
 - 4 Sailors whose place of origin can be determined are the Castilians Martín de Burgos, Andrés Feros, Bartolomé Benítez, Juanes de Arieta, and Juan López, the Andalusians Juan del Puerto and Juan de San Juan, and the Galicians Alberto González and Martín Pérez de Bayona. Pedro and Juan de San Remo were Genoese, and Juan Francés was presumably French. Three slaves were among the crew; Estefano de Lesana, Juan Esclavón, and Gaspar, a diver, who was of African descent. Basques included Pedro de Ochoa, Juanes de Velastegui, Juan de Balzola, Domingo de Colizabarchoruy, Martín de Asprunza, Domingo de Lexaldochemy, and Basque carpenters and caulkers were Juan de Bilbao, Juanes Zuaszo, and Miguel de Urbietta. The storekeeper, Pedro de Casanova, was Basque, as was one of the boatswains, Martín Pérez de Lezcano; the other boatswain was Juan de Malta. Also aboard were two more caulkers, one Mendoza and a Portuguese, Miguel Pérez, and a blacksmith, Master Nicolás de Mocana. Fernando de Alvarado was overseer; Pedro de Fuentes was chief constable, and Juan Ochoa was scribe.
 - 5 Land army personnel were Martín Picarte, also Vizcayan; Juan Sobrino, Lope de Arellano, Garcí Ramírez, Francisco Díaz, Adriano, Juan de Xerez, Juan Cortés, Juan Peres de Guevara, and one Mota, crossbowman. Juan Oliver of Lombardy was cannoneer.
 - 6 Fray Martín de Jesús de La Coruña had been among "The Twelve," the first missionaries to arrive in México in 1522.
 - 7 Michael Mathes, "Asesinato y descubrimiento: El motín de Fortún Ximénez y la incorporación de California al Imperio Español," *Meyibó*, segunda época, I (julio-diciembre, 1990): 31-44. The original document is Patronato 180, Ramo 52, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla. Elimination of the phrase "the said" also eliminates a great deal of legal dreariness; as, for example, in this translated sentence from the inquest: "The said petition being presented in the stated manner, the said gentleman stated that he accepted the said petition as presented..."
 - 8 Salaries and assistance for the expedition amounted to 8,203 pesos and 4 tomines, and the trade goods aboard *Concepción* were worth 800 pesos. "Cuenta de lo que ha gastado el Marqués del Valle, 1533," *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía*, Vol. XII (Madrid: Imprenta de Frías y Cía., 1864-1884), 298-313.
 - 9 Fortún Ximénez's first name appears with two spelling variants in this document, as Xortún and Ortún.
 - 10 Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *La conquista de Nueva España* (México: Editora Nacional, 1958).
 - 11 Cihuatán, Colima.
 - 12 The murderers of Becerra were Pedro Ximénez and, probably, Juanes de Arieta, led by Fortún Ximénez. The mutineers were Miguel Pérez, Alberto González, Juan de Balsola, Pedro Escandón, Pedro Ochoa, Estefano de Lesana, Pedro de Casanueva, Juan de Pinos, Juan del Puerto, Juanes Zuazo (Elmón), Martín Pérez de Lezcano, Juan Francés, Andrés Feros, Juan Olivers, Maestro Pedro, Miguel de Urbietta, Pedro Esclavón, Master Nicolás de Mocana, Juan Sobrino (Cuerno), Adriano (Camacho), Juan Peres de Guevara, and Gaspar, almost all of whom lost their lives in California. Besides the Franciscans and those who testified, only Francisco de Palazuelos (Palacios), Juan de San Remo, and Juan Cortés appear to have remained loyal to the captain. Mathes, *Cortés en California*, 44-45.
 - 13 Alonso de la Rea, *Crónica de la Orden de N. Seráfico P. S. Francisco* (México: Viuda de Bernardo Calderón, 1643).
 - 14 Bernal Díaz del Castillo,
 - 15 Mathes, *Cortés en California*, 29-32, 41-46, 53-61, 95-105.

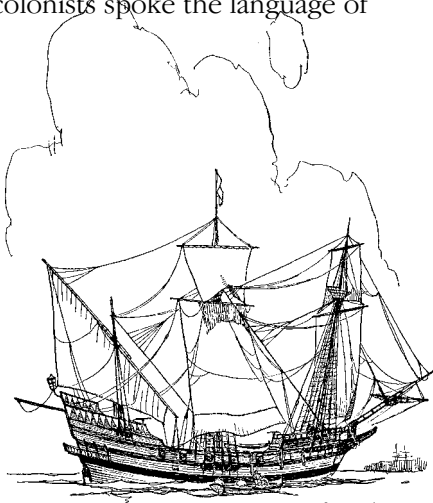
Not-So-Golden *Hinds*

Twentieth-century English and American researchers spent a great deal of effort reconstructing the appearance of Drake's *Golden Hind*, the privateer which made the second circumnavigation of the earth between 1577 and 1580. Since the late 1930s, even more ink has been poured into an argument over the precise location on North America's West Coast where Drake claimed *Nova Albion* for his queen. It seems that the *Golden Hind* is more than just a ship: for many on the West Coast, she is a link with a heroic *English* past, one which is hard to come by in a region whose colonists spoke the language of Drake's enemies.

The reconstructions on this page, we believe, are eclipsed by the drawings on the following pages.
—the editor

Gordon Grant's reconstruction is marred by—among other things—a stern gallery, which appears in no contemporary image of the ship.

From Henry B. Culver's *Forty Famous Ships*, 1936.



This model appeared in a 1950s magazine.

Would Drake have laughed or cried at the sight of this "replica" at Brixham, England?



This model typifies the best early twentieth century attempts. G.S. Laird Lowes of London's Science Museum designed it in the 1940s; it is displayed at Drake's mansion, Buckland Abbey.

The 1974 *Golden Hind II* makes reconstruction problems vivid. Inaccuracies include a mizzenmast stepped too far forward, an imaginary stern gallery, little sheer in her lines, hawse holes too near the waterline, and instead of small-arms ports, this warship sports glazed windows. Her hind figurehead, too, is unlikely in a ship launched as the *Pelican*. Significant inaccuracies also marred her sailing abilities. She was designed to be carried from England to San Francisco aboard a freighter, but in mid-construction it was decided to sail her instead. Before her sea trials, stability tests showed that her insufficient displacement and ballast would likely cause her to capsize, so ballast was increased from 40 to 114 tons, deepening her draft by three feet, and styrofoam-encasing blisters were added at the waterline. Faults aside, she has weathered two voyages around the world.

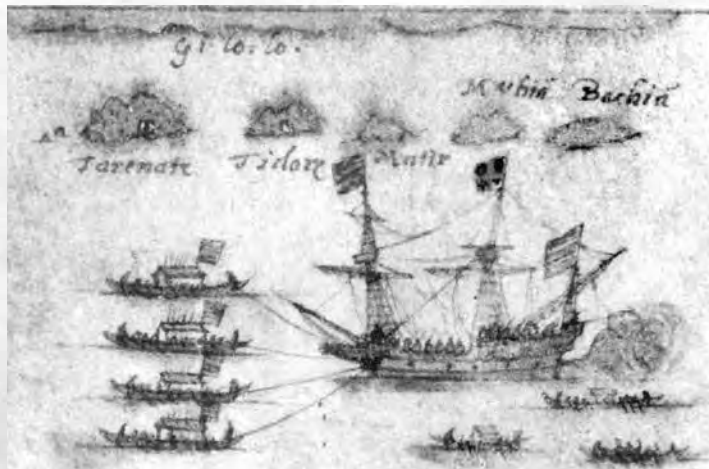


Reconstructing Drake's Golden Hind:

A Fifty-Year Quest

Raymond Aker

"From time to time drawings, models, and replicas of the GOLDEN HIND have been produced, all of necessity based on imagination and uncertain data," wrote a leading authority on the subject, in 1945. This was the situation fifty years ago when I began the drawings on the following pages, which have never been published. Since then, enough information has come to light about Drake's privateer warship, which the Spanish called a galleon, along with data about similar ships of the era, to piece together a plausible reconstruction that Sir Francis himself might recognize.



The drawings on this page are among the earliest views of Drake's ship. Above, boats tow the ship in the Moluccas, from a 1587 map. At left, a 1589 image shows her aground in the Celebes as her crew heaves cargo overboard to lighten her, at a place the author identifies as Vesuvius Reef. She appears to have had open bulwarks, permitting boarding seas to drain off quickly.

The author's background painting depicts Drake's Bay, California, with details partly based on a 1589 map and shifting sandbars in the centuries since. While some argue over where he landed, the author believes that the evidence points strongly to this site.

Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, and the British Library

There is little contemporary information on the ship. Besides the images at left and a few others, she is engraved on a coconut shell which Drake brought home as a souvenir.

The World Encompassed, published by Drake's nephew in 1628, mentions only that she was a hundred ton vessel, complete with a cook room and rich furniture. Of the ship's appearance, the book reports only that Drake "made provision for ornament and delight and divers shows of all sorts of curious workmanship, whereby the civility and magnificence of his country, whithersoever he should come, be the more admired." The nearest thing to a dimension appears in conjunction with the grounding of the ship on an Indonesian reef, when thirteen feet of water were required to refloat her. English documents give her her tonnage variously as 100, 120 and 150 tons, while Spanish accounts vary widely between 180 and 400 tons.

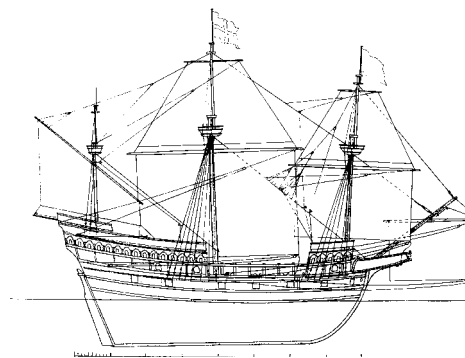
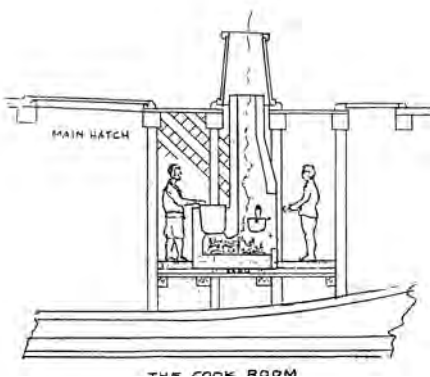
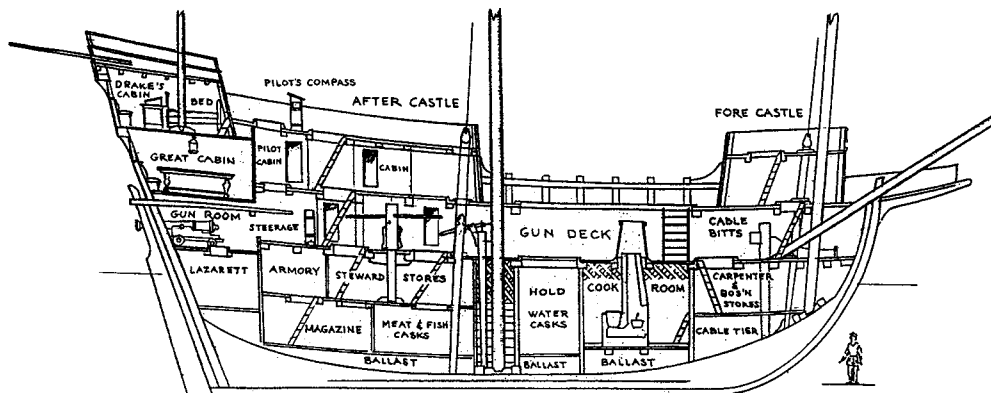
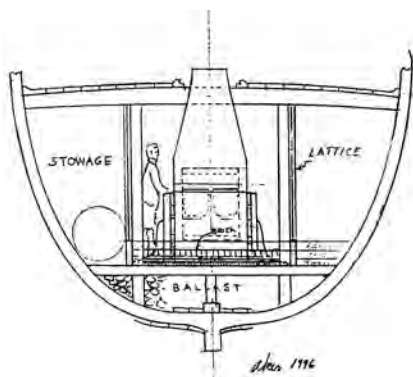
A document discovered and published in 1941 provided important clues to the ship's size, and added a new source of confusion. "An Estymate for the Dockinge, and inclosing of Sr ffrancis Draikes shipp, with a Brick waule etc." gave specifications for a memorial to house the ship, a project which was evidently never carried out. A 15-foot-high brick wall 180 feet in circuit and 24 feet wide inside was to be built, covered by a tiled roof.



The privateer the Spanish feared as "The Dragon" poses before his coat of arms—surmounted by *Golden Hind* perched atop the globe, guided by the cord of Divine Aid. This engraving was made posthumously, in 1626.

Raymond Aker lives in Palo Alto, California. His drawings of the Spanish packet *San Carlos* appeared in our Winter, 2000 issue.

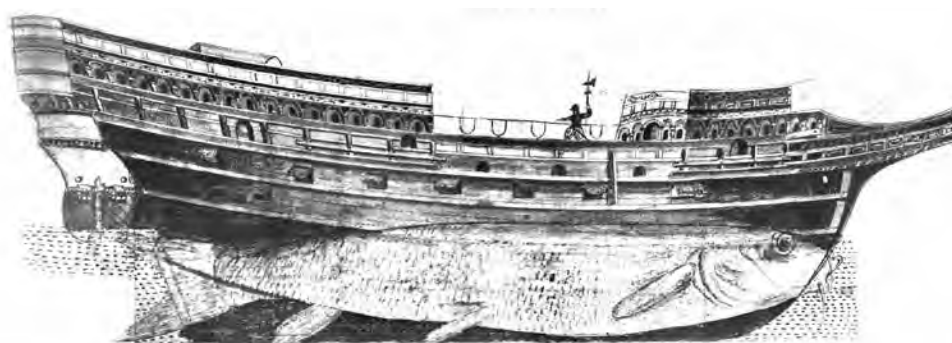


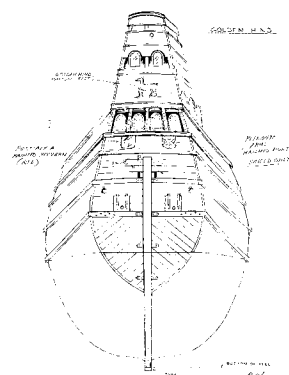
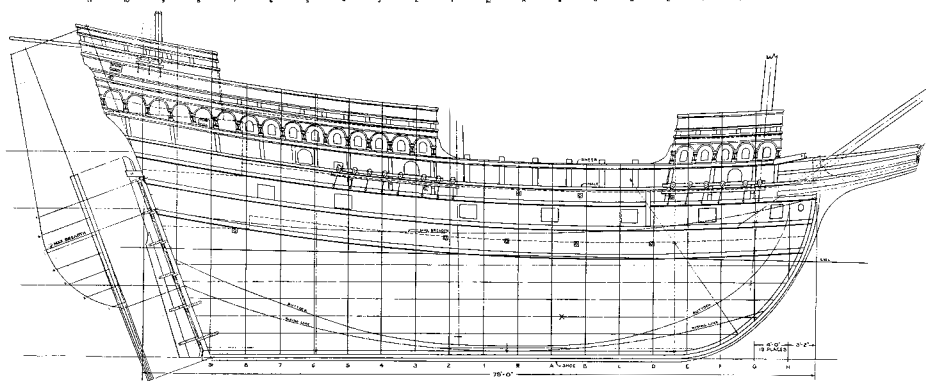
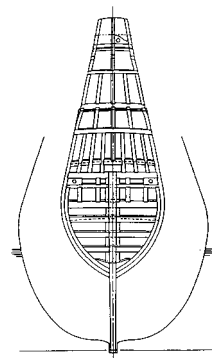
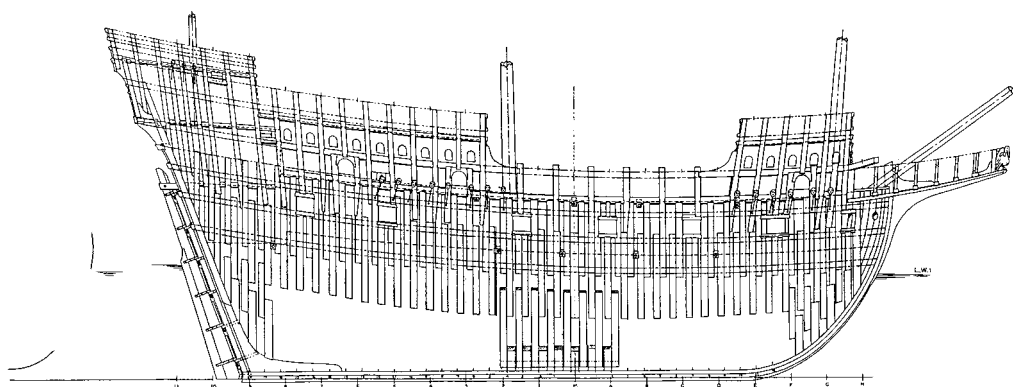
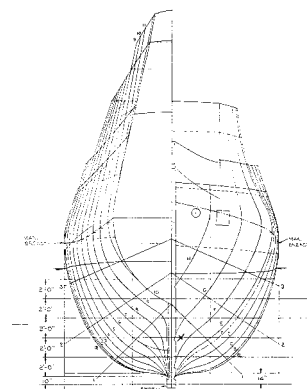
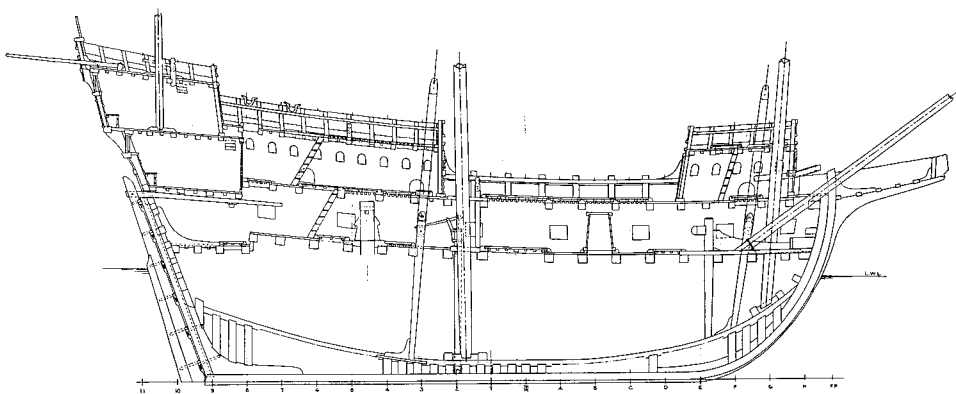


Historians naturally assumed that these specifications were for a building, and reasoned that a rectangular structure with four walls to these dimensions would be too small. Leaving one end open, seventy-eight-foot walls on each side would permit a ship of about one hundred tons to be a bare sixty-seven feet from stem to sternpost, with a forty-seven-foot keel, a beam of nineteen feet, and a draft of little more than nine feet. These became essentially the accepted dimensions, but problems bedeviled the interpretation of this document: how could walls only fifteen feet high support a roof over her, even if she was only displayed from the waterline up? And even with the much too narrow-seeming beam, there would be little space for visitors to squeeze between the ship and the walls, as specified in the document.

In 1954 I began a large cutaway diorama of the *Golden Hind* as part of an exhibit to commemorate the 375th anniversary of Drake's landing in California. As I worked, the accepted length of the ship based on these dimensions began to seem uncomfortably short. A seemingly minor revelation helped me better determine her original size: instead of the specified walls being for a building, they must have been for a dry dock, surrounding the ship with walls 180 feet in circuit. With her deepest draft known to be thirteen feet, and two-foot keel blocks aft, the vessel's waterline would come to the *top* of a fifteen-foot-high brick wall, and thus she would be displayed from the waterline up. But what of the specified space to walk around the ship? In a dry dock with vertical walls, the narrow floors of ships of the era would have allowed ample space to walk around the bottom of the ship, even if her breadth at the waterline was nearly the width of the dock. The question of the roof remained a problem until I saw a seventeenth century French print showing a galley ashore in a storage

Rare early ship plans like the example at right by shipwright Matthew Baker aided the reconstruction. He thought that the ideal hull should have a "cod's head and mackerel's tail," sharply tapering aft.



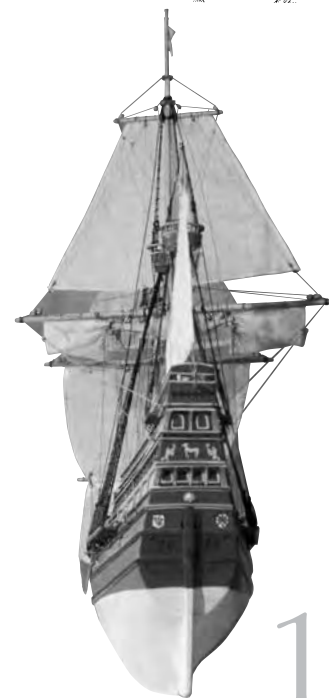


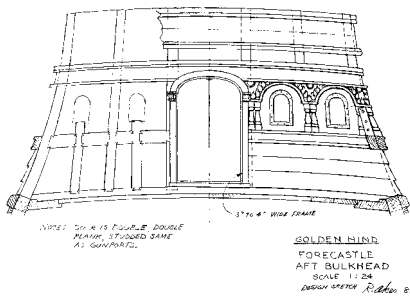
These previously unpublished drawings are probably the most thorough “plausible reconstruction” of the ship ever attempted. The earliest of these was begun in 1955; the latest details were added this year.

dock: above her stood a roof supported by vertical posts.

The dimensions of the dock led me to draw up plans for a ship of 120 tons, the figure given by John Drake, the captain’s young cousin, and seconded by Edward Cliffe, who was aboard the *Elizabeth*. In 1981, however, Drake’s application for a letter of marque came to light. In it, he states that he had the *Pellycan* of Plymouth built at his own expense, and that the burden of this ship, later renamed the *Golden Hind*, was 150 tons. Armed now with the correct tonnage, dimensions became clearer: she was approximately eighty feet between stem and sternpost, with a breadth inside her planks of as much as twenty-three feet, and a keel about two-and-one-half times as long as her breadth.

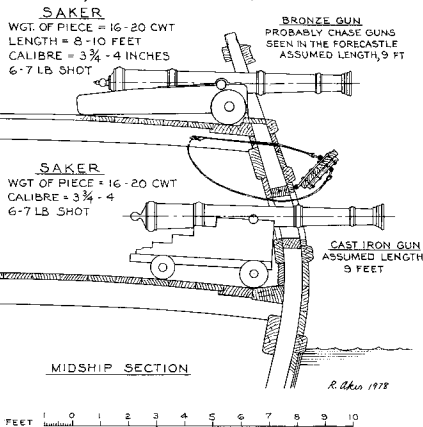
My efforts to flesh out the hull form using Elizabethan methods yielded results so similar to a six-section hull design by Mathew Baker





Small arms ports with carved arches and pilasters follow examples drawn by Matthew Baker, but the details are from carvings on a chair made from the ship's timbers, which the author believes may echo features on the ship herself. She also probably mounted 18 cannons like these.

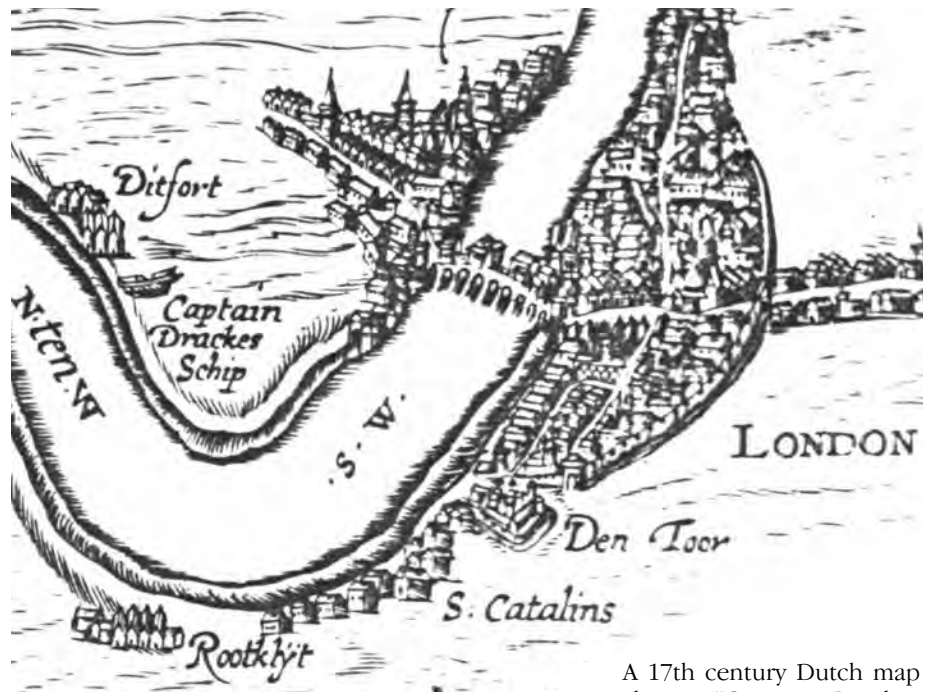
A prisoner of Drake stated: "The ship carries twelve large peices of cast iron as well as two of bronze of about sixteen or twenty hundred-weight each." Cornelius Lanberd



GOLDEN HIND
ARMAMENT

that I decided to create the lines of the reconstruction by scaling his drawing to the length and breadth of the the dimensions I had arrived at. In effect, the reconstruction is Mathew Baker's design for an all-purpose ship, with the hull corresponding to his ideal shape of a cod's head and mackerel tail. *Golden Hind*'s actual lines may have differed somewhat, but not by much.

While the "inclosing" of *Golden Hind* was never undertaken, what happened to the ship when Drake returned from his epic voyage? In order to create a fit stage for Queen Elizabeth to knight the privateer she nicknamed "My Pyrate," the galleon was hauled into a small creek near the Royal Dockyard in Deptford, and walled in with earth. Once the Queen had gone, the world's first ship preserved as a memorial gradually went to ruin. In 1618, the secretary to the Venetian ambassador noted in his diary that "We likewise passed along the banks of the Thames in sight of some relics of the ship of the famous Captain Drake, which looked exactly like the bleached ribs and bare skull of a dead horse." Wood from her timbers was carved into a chair, now at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and made into a table for the Inner Temple in London. Though the ship's remnants were finally broken up by 1662, an intriguing possibility remains: future archaeologists digging in the earth at Deptford may someday uncover the remains of the hull of one of the most famous ships of all time.



A 17th century Dutch map shows "Captain Drackes Schip" high and dry, a forlorn sight near London.

NOTES

- 1 Gregory Robinson, "The *Golden Hind*," *The Mariner's Mirror* 31 no. 4 (October 1945): 232.
- 2 Francis Drake, *The World Encompassed* (London: 1628).
- 3 The most reliable Spanish witnesses place her between 180 and 220 tons. For details from Spanish accounts, see Zelia Nuttall, *New Light on Drake* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1914); Henry R. Wagner, *Sir Francis Drake's Voyage Around the World* (San Francisco: John Howell, 1926).
- 4 R.C. Anderson, "The *Golden Hind* at Deptford," *The Mariner's Mirror* 27, no. 1 (January 1941): 77-78. The estimate for the length and breadth of the dock wall could have been arrived at by running a line around the ship at the waterline, then rounding off the figure to 180'. The ship's maximum breadth could be obtained by dropping plumb bobs from each side of the deck to the waterline and measuring the space between, then rounding off to 24', assuming there would be a small air space between ship and wall.
- 5 These measurements yield 80 tons, and tons and tonnage of as much as 107 tons.
- 6 Paul Williams, "The Ownership of Drake's *Golden Hind*," *The Mariner's Mirror* 67, No. 2 (May 1981): 185. Though the 150 ton figure seems incompatible with the figures of 100 or 120 tons given elsewhere, the latter numbers likely reflect an allowance subtracted from her true tonnage, to permit a reduction in tonnage-based port taxes because of her role as privateer for the Queen.
- 7 For an effort to arrive mathematically at her proportions, see "The Mystery of the Tonnage and Dimensions of the *Pelican-Golden Hinde*," *The Mariner's Mirror* 34, No. 1 (January 1948).

Golden Hind sails again, in a model built from these plans by Bill Brown.

In Pirates! In Story & History; photo by John Wright

She is staunch when sailing with the wind astern if it is not very strong, but in a sea which makes her labor, she ships a good deal of water, whether sailing with the wind astern or with the wind abeam.

—Portuguese captive *Nuño da Silva*

Hipólito Bouchard.



A portrait of Bouchard, uniformed as an Argentinean Navy captain—a rank he never attained, though he was briefly a captain in Peru's navy. There is a great deal of misinformation about this elusive and interesting character.

Museo Histórico Nacional, Buenos Aires

Pirate or Patriot?

Carlos López

On November 19, 1818, two mysterious ships were sighted from near the Presidio of San Francisco, the fort which guarded northern Alta California for Spain. They quickly slipped away, but would return. When they finally sailed away for good, they left smoking ruins behind them.

As Spain's American colonies exploded in revolt, beginning in Mexico in 1810, the shipment of supplies to California dwindled to a trickle. Some Peruvian and Panamanian vessels, such as the *San Antonio*, *Hermosa Mexicana* and *Cazadora* managed to slip through, but by 1816, the Peruvian coast was tightly blockaded by the insurgents. More bad news arrived

in Monterey that June, where Lieutenant Pablo Vicente de Solá, governor of the undermanned province of California, received word from Mazatlán that several privateers had been sighted along the Mexican coast and might attempt to sail north.¹

The alarmed Governor had also heard from neutral vessels that the whole Pacific coast of Mexico was under observation by the insurgents. All along the coast, rumors flew of frigates sailing in front of San Blas, mystery ships anchored off Acapulco, a ship blockading Tecapam, and full-rigged ships off Ventanas; one lookout in Tonalán reported a phantom fleet of seven ships.²

The man who turned the Governor's nightmares into reality was a French privateer carrying a *patente de corso*, or letter of marque, from the Provincias Unidas de La Plata, present-day Argentina. The document authorized Hipólito Bouchard, a private individual, to attack Spanish shipping wherever he found it and divide the spoils with the insurgent government in Buenos Aires, a task he undertook

with characteristic vigor. By all accounts, Bouchard was a difficult man, unfriendly, quarrelsome and extravagant, and capable of duplicity and even forgery when it suited him. But he had enormous personal courage, and as a leader made quick decisions and carried them out fully.³

Recent research affirms that André-Paul Bouchard was born in 1780 in Toulon in Southern France. Enlisting as a nine-year old boy in the French Navy on the cusp of the French Revolution, he apparently served aboard *Le Genereaux* at Aboukir Bay. Captured and repatriated, he re-enlisted and served in the Caribbean. After returning to France he emigrated to the United States where, by 1809, he resided in the major privateering port of Baltimore.⁴ The date he arrived in Argentina is unknown, as is the reason the young expatriate soon changed his name to Hypolite, the name of his younger brother.

Like many other Europeans and North Americans, Bouchard sought glory, fame, fortune and employment in the protracted Wars of American Independence against Spain.⁵ He was evidently a skillful self-promoter, for this ordinary seaman obtained command of a schooner in a small Argentinean squadron, the first to operate on the Paraná River. They were disastrously defeated at San Nicolás, however, and Bouchard's schooner, the *25 de Mayo*, was captured by Royalist forces. The new captain and a few surviving sailors made their way by land to Buenos Aires, where Bouchard was court-martialed for failing to assist his captured commodore, and even of firing on his own crew. Absolved, he commanded launches armed with cannon in the defense of Buenos Aires against Michelena's Royalist squadron. Evidently unable to persuade the authorities to entrust him with another ship, he turned soldier, and joined General José de San Martín's Grenadiers Regiment. He fought with such courage at San Lorenzo that he was awarded Argentinean citizenship on April 29, 1813 and promoted lieutenant. This, however, is the final entry in Bouchard's record as a grenadier; he left the army for reasons never fully explained.

Carlos López teaches at Menlo College, California, and is the author of eight books in Spanish and English; his Spanish-language biography of Lord Cochrane is in press. We were pleased to publish his article "When the Chileans Invaded Baja California" in our Fall 1999, issue.



Bouchard apparently served as a seaman at Aboukir Bay in 1798, where Nelson crushed Napoleon's ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The unemployed lieutenant, now married and expecting his first child, managed to convince several investors to purchase a ship and a letter of marque for him. He joined other privateers in a small squadron under William Brown, an Irishman who had successfully commanded an Argentinian squadron on the River Plate. Brown's plan was to round the Horn and attack Spanish shipping along South America's Pacific coast. This unexpected move caught the Royalists by surprise, and Brown's squadron successfully raided the commerce of the Viceroyalty of Lima from Chile to Ecuador. The campaign nearly ended catastrophically at Guayaquil, however, when the commodore's ship ran aground and he and his men narrowly escaped death. Brown managed to negotiate his own release by exchanging himself with Royalist prisoners on Bouchard's ship. Reduced to two ships, the squadron sailed to the Galapagos Islands, where the captains quarreled over the distribution of prizes, the responsibilities for their failure at Guayaquil, the loss of ships and other matters. Brown agreed to give Bouchard the captured 677-ton frigate *Consecuencia*, and Bouchard returned alone around the Horn to Buenos Aires.⁶

Back in the Argentine capital, he formed a partnership with Dr. Vicente Echeverría, who invested the money to fit out the *Consecuencia* for a privateering voyage without parallel in the Wars of Independence. Renamed the *Argentina*, she sailed from Buenos Aires for the Indian Ocean on a marauding cruise around the globe, carrying a heavily-armed multinational crew.

In Indonesia, the privateer claims to have repelled a pirate attack: "After an hour and a half of firing and clashing of weapons, the captain of the *proa*, seeing that all his efforts failed, stabbed himself twice and jumped overboard. Five others followed suit and the rest surrendered a little after.⁷ According to Bouchard, twenty-four younger prisoners were made part of his own crew; tying up the rest, his men placed them back in their own craft and sank it with cannon fire.

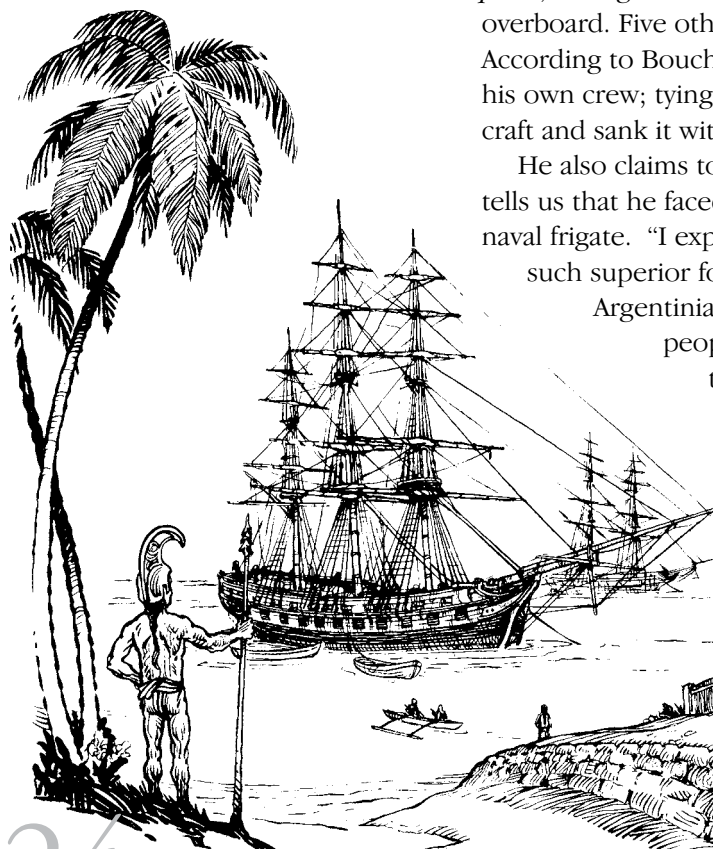
He also claims to have blockaded Manila for five months. There he tells us that he faced the galleons *San Fernando* and *Rosel* and a Spanish naval frigate. "I expected an attack, the enemy finding themselves with such superior forces. I took my precautions but was not afraid. The

Argentinians had resolved to do or die, in spite of the few people we had left." His only worthwhile capture off the Philippines, however, was a small merchant brig that cost him fifteen dead, including his second-in-command Lieutenant Somers. Worse, the brig and its prize crew of eight sailors and an officer then disappeared. After enduring Pacific storms, sickness and scarcity of foodstuffs, the *Argentina*'s marine ensign joyously reported sighting the island of "San Duche"—the Sandwich Islands—on August 17, 1818.

The cruise thus far had brought little in the way of glory or prizes. Bouchard had not captured a single large prize and had little booty to show, though he claimed to have taken sixteen merchant ships loaded with colonial products; these were probably small Filipino *praus* engaged in inter-island transport.

The American-built 34-gun *Argentina* in Hawaii in 1818.

Drawing by Gregory Irons, courtesy of Bellerophon Books





Eight years after Bouchard's visit, California's capital of Monterey remained a primitive outpost.

Upon reaching Hawaii he learned at last of a potential Spanish prize anchored at Kealahou. It turned out not to be a Spanish vessel at all, however, but another privateer from Buenos Aires, the corvette *Santa Rosa de Chacabuco*. The *Chacabuco*'s crew had mutinied off the Chilean coast, marooned the officers, and turned pirate. The meeting proved fortunate for Bouchard, however, for the mutineers' hold was laden with bullion. Also fortunately, the *Chacabuco*'s Hawaiian hosts, more familiar with silver, did not value gold particularly highly.⁸

Bouchard immediately forged documents that authorized him to confiscate *Chacabuco* and any other rebellious Argentinian ships, an arrangement Hawaii's King Kamehameha conditionally accepted. In his diplomatic efforts, Bouchard presented his own epaulets, a sword, and even a commission as Lieutenant Colonel in the Argentinian Army to the King, though he had no authority to do so.⁹

The privateer's effort to capture, judge and punish the pirates were likewise conducted without authority. Peter Corney, an English adventurer Bouchard recruited in Hawaii to captain the *Chacabuco*, watched as the mutiny's leaders were shot and others lashed, "which tore their backs in a shocking manner."¹⁰ The pardoned mutineers joined a truly international complement of sixty aboard the corvette, including thirty Native Hawaiians, Americans, Spaniards, Portuguese, Creoles, blacks, Filipinos, Malays and a few Englishmen.

A new dilemma confronted Bouchard, however, for his letter of marque was about to expire, leaving him legally no less a pirate than the men he had executed. While he later argued unconvincingly that the expiration date was automatically extended because his weeks spent capturing and refitting the *Chacabuco* did not count, Bouchard was technically a pirate before he sighted the California coast, albeit one flying the sky-blue and white Argentinian flag.¹¹

He made no secret that he planned to sail for California, sack Spanish properties there and spread the cause of independence. The captain of the American brig *Clarion* carried the news from Oahu to Santa Barbara, where he alerted Presidio Commandant José de la Guerra.¹² De la Guerra hurriedly dispatched a mounted messenger to Solá, and sent warnings to the missions.

Solá had heard such rumors before, but this one was sufficient to provoke elaborate precautionary measures: he ordered missionaries to obey all orders from presidio commandants, and valuables from the missions, such as sacred vessels, were packed for shipment inland. Ammunition and supplies were to be gathered where presidio garrisons



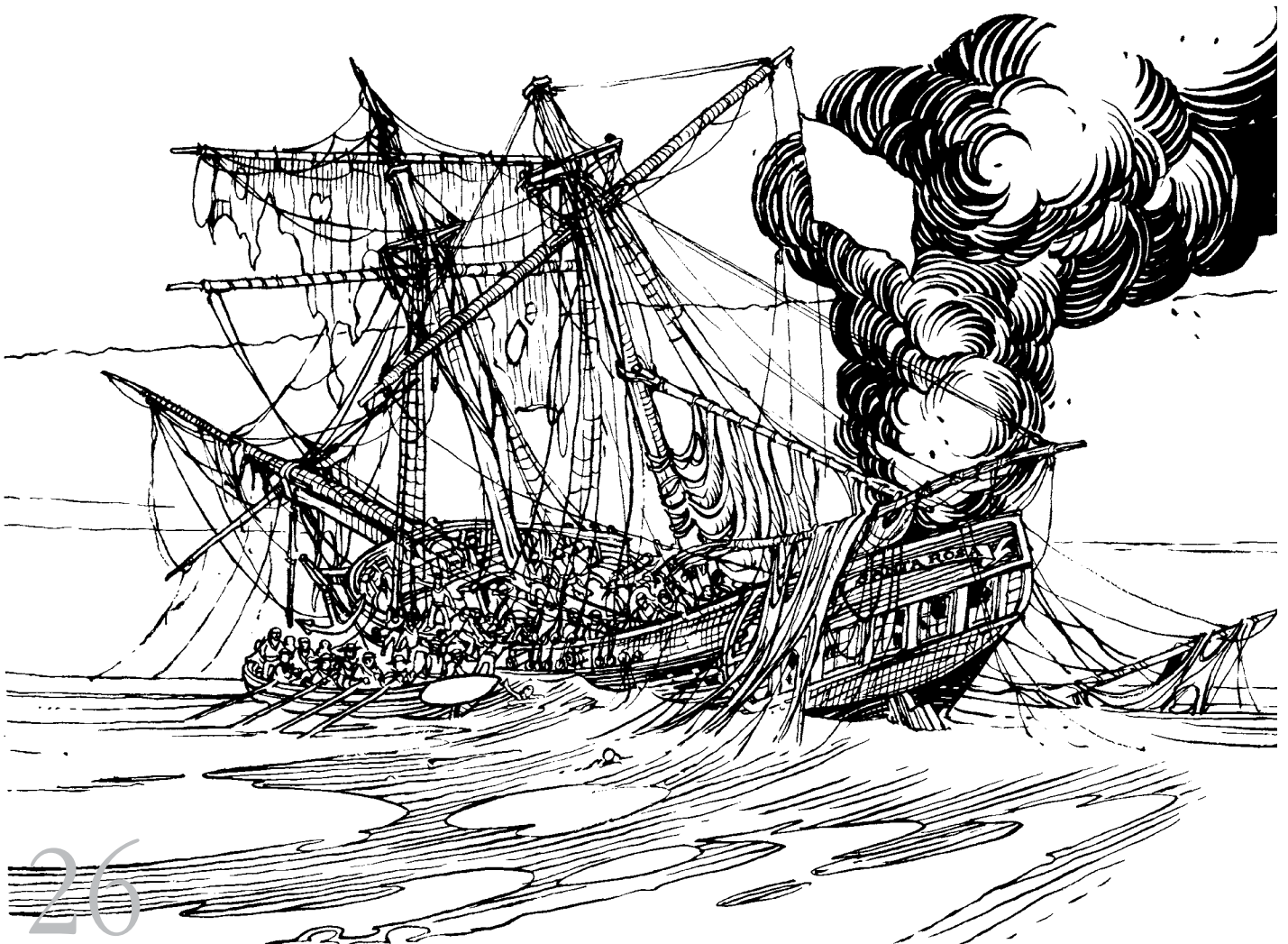
could regroup. Women and children were to stand ready to leave the presidios at the first sign of attack, while cattle and horses would be herded inland. At twenty-five spots along the coast, pairs of Indian men from the missions were ordered to be posted with horses, ready to carry news of any sighting.¹³

When an uneventful month went by after the *Clarion*'s call, however, civilians returned to coastal settlements and emergency measures were relaxed. But the governor's continued vigilance proved justified on November 20, 1818, when the two warships were sighted from Santa Cruz.¹⁴ That evening, the lookout at Punta Pinos gave the alarm: the ships were approaching Monterey. Despite the governor's preparations, he could muster only forty men in the capital's defense: twenty-five soldiers of the presidio garrison, four regular artillerymen and eleven militiamen.

The adobe presidio was useless for defense; better was the battery of cannons behind a low V-shaped wall on a hill overlooking the beach, grandly termed the "castillo." For the emergency at hand, the Governor also moved six small field guns to the beach, siting them himself for maximum effect.¹⁵ That task accomplished, Solá ordered women and children inland to the Rancho del Rey, the area near present-day Salinas where most of the presidio's livestock grazed. With nightfall approaching, the *Chacabuco* anchored near the beach while the larger ship kept further to seaward. Bouchard planned to take the castillo by surprise by landing

Badly mauled by Monterey's guns, the 300-ton, American built *Santa Rosa de Chacabuco* could bring few of her eighteen 12- and 18-pounder cannon to bear.

Drawing by Gregory Irons, courtesy of Bellerophon Books



nearby, and he sent the *Chacabuco* for her shallower draft, and because Corney knew Monterey Bay from an 1815 visit and could better choose a landing place. Corney, however, did not know of the cannons placed on the beach to receive him.¹⁶

Unbeknownst to the *Californios* on shore, the lack of wind that night endangered the flagship and forced Bouchard to lower boats and have her towed further offshore. Following this maneuver, the boats carried two hundred men, armed with muskets and pikes, over to the *Chacabuco*. From her decks they were to land and take the fort in the morning.¹⁷

During the rainy night, the *Californios* tried to communicate with the ships through a speaking trumpet, to no avail. At dawn, instead of sending a boat as the watchers ashore anticipated, the *Chacabuco* opened fire. The *Californios* returned fire with their six cannons at close range for two hours. Solá reported that his artillery “kept up an effective and constant fire, making much damage to the frigate, assisted by the presidio soldiers who ran up to the battery with unshakable serenity, in spite of the many bullets that were falling.”¹⁸

Corney realized the gravity of his position: *Chacabuco* was aground and unable to effectively return the unexpected fire from shore. He ordered his men into the boats on the seaward side and, to the Californians surprise, lowered his flag. Not surprisingly, Corney’s account omits this detail, but other witnesses confirm it, including Bouchard, frustrated that “after seventeen shots from the fortress I suffered the pain of seeing the flag of my country lowered.”¹⁹ It was not the shots from the castillo, however, which were battering Corney; Bouchard probably could not see, with the *Chacabuco* obstructing his view, the thick fire pouring from the beach.

Seeing the flag struck, the jubilant artillerymen demanded that the captain land, but were disappointed to hear that he had left in one of the boats. A man who landed under a flag of truce was arrested and jailed at the governor’s orders, while a second messenger brought a written request from *La Argentina*. Accounts of this exchange conflict: Bouchard claimed that he requested only to be allowed to move the *Chacabuco* without interference; Solá claimed that the message demanded the province’s surrender to the insurgents. The supposed contents of the responses they received also differ: Bouchard claimed that he was asked to pay a high ransom to free his stranded ship, while Solá ostensibly proclaimed that he would defend California in the name of the King as long as there was one person alive, and that he would spill his last drop of blood in defense of his country.

The next day the *Chacabuco* remained at anchor near the beach, under heavy rain. Most of the insurgent troops apparently still huddled aboard, tired, many wet, without food and with no boats to escape. Bouchard found the situation grave: “The boats returned from the corvette with little order, bringing at most, five men each. I had but forty men on board the frigate, including the captain and the last page. All the people in the corvette were under the enemy, but they had not been landed...it was a dangerous situation but I tried to keep a serene spirit.” Circumstances seemed to lean in the Californians favor: though outnumbered, they were well-led, determined to resist and sufficiently armed, and were anticipating reinforcements. They had just forced the



Led by naked Hawaiians with pikes, Corney's men stormed the castillo as the defenders mounted and fled.

Drawing by Gregory Irons, courtesy of Bellerophon Books

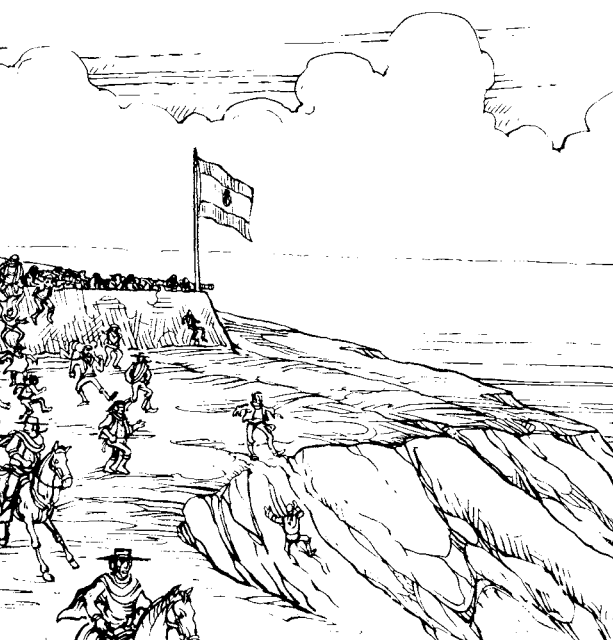
surrender of an enemy vessel and confined his superior numbers where they could do no harm.

During the night, however, the wind rose and allowed the *Argentina* closer inshore. Under cover of darkness, boats rescued the bulk of the men from the *Chacabuco*. Those remaining aboard claimed they heard the dancing and singing of the *Californios* all night, celebrating their victory.

At eight the following morning, nine boats, four carrying cannons, rowed towards Punta Potreros, between Punta Pinos and the castillo. Solá sent cavalry under Ensign Estrada to intercept them, but the officer, seeing "four hundred armed men and four field pieces" ordered a retreat. Conflicting accounts share only exaggeration in common: the insurgents actually had fewer than half that number, while the landing force claimed to have scared away between three and four hundred mounted lancers, rather than the twenty-five present.²⁰

At the same time, the *Chacabuco* opened fire upon the beach. The artillerymen were ordered to spike their guns, burn the powder and retreat towards the presidio, from which a few shots were fired. Solá ordered a retreat inland. Dragging a twelve-pounder field gun, two boxes of powder, six thousand rifle cartridges and all the documents in the archives, Solá's men began a hurried march towards the Rancho del Rey. Bouchard's troops entered the capital behind their chief, followed by a standard bearer and accompanied by fife and drum.

Bouchard claimed he fought alongside his men to conquer the presidio. "They put up a strong resistance and therefore, with blood and fire we finally managed to force the surrender of the whole town and to liberate the prisoners," an astonishing feat for one entering an empty town.²¹ As a *Californio* recalled, "Bouchard's troops marched unchallenged into the presidio which had been abandoned."²² One man was captured, a Californian named Molina who, left behind, had stumbled into town in an alcoholic daze. As the Argentinean flag flew above the presidio, in Corney's words, "all the sailors were employed in



searching the houses for money, and breaking and ruining every thing." A few silver bars were found, and two of the castillo's guns taken, but almost nothing of value had been left behind. At Bouchard's orders the presidio went up in flames. Gardens and orchards were destroyed, and the livestock the residents left behind slaughtered, doubtless alienating those whom Bouchard had hoped to inspire with the insurgents' cause. Solá received reinforcements but dared not attack, limiting himself to observing the privateers from a distance. On November 26, the

relieved governor watched the *Argentina* and the repaired *Chacabuco* sail southwards, leaving behind smoking ruins and two prisoners.²³

Alarm at where they would strike next, along with hurried preparations for resistance, spread through the isolated Franciscan missions. Even as Father Señán of San Buenaventura railed at the insurgents who had forced him to abandon his church as "heretics, schismatics, excommunicated, idol worshipers and moors," he sent ten armed *vaqueros* north and promised that a company of Indian archers would leave the next day to reinforce Santa Barbara; Indian auxiliary forces were mustered and trained at several of the missions.²⁴

Others took advantage of the confusion. When unruly inhabitants of the pueblo of Branciforte, near Mission Santa Cruz persuaded the Fathers that they had come to help pack the church's belongings, they robbed it instead.

The ships next anchored north of Santa Barbara, at Refugio, sacking and burning the isolated property of the Ortega family.²⁵ As at Monterey, the men turned to vandalism: decapitating three stallions. Next day, they re-embarked hastily when troops from Santa Barbara appeared nearby. A party of raiders was ambushed and the *Californios* lassoed three men and



Mission Santa Barbara overlooks the beach where some of the more farcical events of Bouchard's raid occurred.

Lieutenant Taylor, who claimed to be from Boston.²⁶

On December 6, the ships anchored in Santa Barbara, where they were not expected due to the open and shallow bay, unsafe during the winter. A messenger sent ashore could find nobody to deliver his message to, and finally left, leaving a letter pinned to a stick planted on the beach. In it, Bouchard requested an exchange of prisoners and promised to stay away from the coast if his conditions were met.²⁷ Commandant José de la Guerra stalled for time and answered that he needed the governor's permission. Meanwhile, he tried an old trick, ordering his men to march in and out of the pirates' view, making his force appear larger than it was. Finally, the exchange took place, and Bouchard's lone prisoner, the alcoholic Molina, was left behind, along with four men who either deserted or were too drunk to return to their ships.

Ignoring his promise to leave the coast, Bouchard anchored off San Juan Capistrano on December 14. He sent a message inland to the mission, stipulating that "if they gave us an immediate supply of provisions, we would spare their town." The missionary in charge answered insolently, in Corney's words: "we might land if we pleased and they would give us an immediate supply of powder and shot." Bouchard, "very much incensed at this answer," decided after consulting with his officers to send Corney with 140 men and two guns. A cavalry party watched the raiders from the distance, feinted an attack, and retired at full gallop. Corney occupied the mission and adjacent buildings and after breakfast allowed his men to sack them:

We found the town well stocked with everything but money and destroyed much wine and spirits and all the public property; set fire to the king's stores, barracks and governor's house, and about two o'clock we marched back, though not in the order we went, many of the men being intoxicated, and some were so much so, that we had to lash them on the field-pieces and drag them to the beach, where, about six o'clock, we arrived with the loss of six men.²⁸

Three had been killed and three deserted, and twenty of his men were flogged for drunkenness the next day.

Peter Corney found San Juan Capistrano "a most beautiful town and mission" before he burned it.



Bouchard's twenty-five days in California produced little booty, cost him several men, and one of his ships had barely escaped destruction. No desires of independence took root among the populace, and not until after the insurgent victory in Mexico three years later was the Spanish flag peacefully lowered over California.

The privateers landed on Cedros Island where they exchanged food and supplies with sea otter hunters, hunted deer, and feasted on the hearts and tongues of elephant seals and sea lions. Five men deserted with a whaleboat. After capturing a merchant brig on Christmas Eve, they landed on the Tres Mariás Islands, where the Hawaiians discovered a taro-like plant from which they tried to make *poi*; instead, twelve died painful deaths from poisoning.

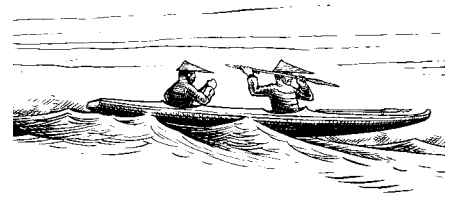
On their voyage south they offered no real threat to the Mexican coast, although they did land parties that communicated with local insurgents.²⁹ Three bizarre actions were fought against other privateers, evidently due to the confusion occasioned by the common privateer practice of deceptively flying enemy or neutral flags. The first was fought at dusk against the Chilean Insurgent brig *Chileno* off San Blas, and the second with the Royalist corvette *Fidelidad*. A Royalist prisoner aboard *El Chileno* described the former encounter:

...several actions took place during the month and days in which we were prisoners. The first was with a large and a small frigate that initially raised the Spanish flag and, after the Insurgent from Buenos Aires fired, despite the fact that the Chileans raised their flag, this signal did not prevent them from fighting all night...³⁰

Bouchard sailed on to Sonsonate, El Salvador, where he captured four small vessels, including the schooner *María Sofía*—the neutral property of an Englishman. Another encounter with the brig *Chileno*, in full daylight, resulted in a prolonged exchange of fire because Bouchard, aboard the *Chacabuco*, was again flying a Spanish flag. Three men were killed and three severely wounded before he exchanged flags and the *Chileno* suspended her fire. The *Chacabuco* sustained considerable damage that had to be repaired in Sonsonate before they could resume sailing south; the Captain fumed, "I would have taken the proper revenge, but I had no force to do so."³¹

Bouchard received no hero's welcome in South America. Arriving in Valparaíso low on provisions and water, and having lost about forty men on the voyage, he was arrested by Lord Cochrane, commander of the Chilean Navy. Court-martialed for the second time in his career, he was charged with piracy and with attacking and capturing neutral and allied ships, and heard crewmen testify about his inhumane treatment of prisoners and other violations. Bouchard's arrest by Cochrane actually saved him from hanging, for the British commodore at Valparaíso intended to send him in chains to London to be tried as a pirate, but Cochrane refused to hand him over. Thanks to political connections—his former superiors in the Grenadiers Regiment were now Chile's victorious liberators—he went free.³²

In June, 1822, Bouchard was sued by his financial backer Echeverría, who claimed to have not yet received any share of the profits. Nothing came of the extended trial, and Bouchard was soon in command of his ship again. The *Argentina*, no longer a privateer (her expired license

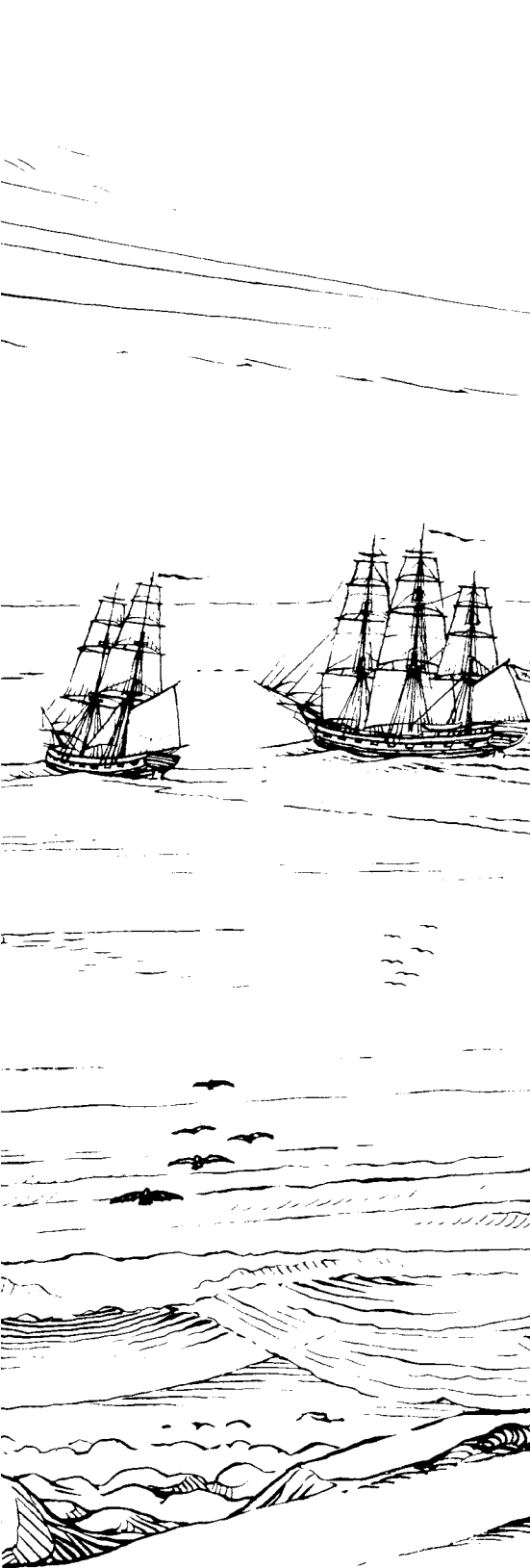


Sea otter hunters in their *baidarkas* assisted the privateers at Cedros Island, Baja California.

Drawing by Gregory Irons, courtesy of Bellerophon Books



The extraordinary Lord Cochrane, expatriate Scottish commander of the Chilean Navy.



Where the pirate ships which the *Californios* called the *fragata negra* and the *fragata chica* would strike next, no one knew.

Drawing by Gregory Irons, courtesy of Bellerophon Books

could not be renewed), regained her old name of *Consecuencia* and served as a transport in the Liberating Expedition which finally broke Spain's hold on Perú. General San Martín rewarded his former subordinate with a commission in the new Peruvian Navy and command of the frigate *Prueba*, but Bouchard evidently did not like naval life. Resigning his commission, he was rewarded with a Peruvian estate; he never returned to Buenos Aires and his wife and child.

Death claimed the fifty-seven year-old Bouchard with something of the same suddenness that marked the privateer's descent upon California nineteen years before. His death certificate states that "Captain Hipólito Bouchard was buried, after he was killed the night before last by his own slaves, suddenly."³³

NOTES

- 1 Further news stressed the dangers posed by privateers blockading Callao and Guayaquil. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. 2 (San Francisco: the History Company, 1886), 211. *Californios* whose memoirs Bancroft collected believed that the privateers had licenses issued by San Martín. Bancroft followed suit, but this was not the case; San Martín never issued licenses because he was never head of state in Chile or Argentina.
- 2 Legajo 33, Mexico 14, documentos anexos, Audiencia de Guadalajara, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla. The unreliable Juan Alvarado memoir in the Bancroft Library states that in 1817, a ship anchored in Monterey, whose captain, later suspected to have been Bouchard, claimed to lead a scientific expedition. His second in command, one Gómez, invited Commandant Estudillo and Solá aboard. Both refused, suspecting these "Englishmen" who drank and smoked freely and spoke Spanish too well, and the frigate sailed next day after firing a salute. Alvarado reports that a song, "La Remadora," was composed to celebrate the suspicious visitor's departure. Bancroft dismisses the episode as false. While it could not have been Bouchard, Chilean privateers under English captains were in the Pacific at that time, and a French author who sailed the Gulf of California wrote of hearing about a Mexican ship captured by an English privateer off San Francisco. Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. 2, 251; Cyprien Combier, *Voyage au Golfe de Californie* (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1864).
- 3 A scholarly, well-documented biography of Bouchard has yet to be written. See Héctor R. Ratto, *Capitán de navío Hipólito Bouchard* (Buenos Aires, 1961); Manuel Chichero, *El Corsario del Plata: Hipólito Bouchard y su viaje alrededor del mundo*, (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999) and anonymous, *Hipólito Bouchard: marino al servicio de la independencia argentina y americana*, (Buenos Aires, 1968). Bartolomé Mitre's *El Crucero de la Argentina* (Rosario: Ed. Biblioteca, 1968) deserves to be classified as "historical fantasy," according to preeminent Chilean historian F.A. Encina. There are at least four books of fiction about him.
- 4 Patrick O'Dowd, "Pirates and Patriots," *La Campana: A Quarterly Publication of the Santa Barbara Trust for Historical Preservation* (Winter 1997-98): 2-16. While Mr. O'Dowd does not cite his sources for these facts about Bouchard's early career, he attests to having undertaken significant research in French archives. At present, scholars must eagerly await more formally documented research from Mr. O'Dowd and these promising new sources.
- 5 No books in English or Spanish are devoted to the naval campaigns of these wars, besides memoirs by participants and naval histories of Peru, Argentina, Chile and Brazil. Two works in English discuss Pacific campaigns: Donald Worcester, *Sea Power and Chilean Independence* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962) and Carlos López, *Chile: A Brief Naval History*, (Valparaíso: Imprenta Armada, 1999).
- 6 This expedition is well documented by Royalist and Insurgent sources. See *Estudios Históricos Biográficos Críticos y Bibliográficos sobre la Independencia de Chile*, Tomo IV (Santiago de Chile: Fondo Medina, 1995).
- 7 Bouchard, "Diario de Navegación," Gobierno Nacional 1810-1828, Guerra, Campañas Navales, V-XXIV-11-6. AGN, Buenos Aires. Presented during his trial, this narrative is the only full account of the circumnavigation. Interrogation of the crew by the Governor of Valparaíso, Luis de la Cruz, proved its inaccuracy, and that it was primarily written after the dates given.
- 8 Kamehameha would accept only silver bars in payment, forcing the pirates to barter with their gold at a rather reduced rate of exchange. Lewis W. Bealer, "Bouchard in the Islands of the Pacific," *Pacific Historical Review* (Winter 1937): 337.
- 9 Ratto, *Capitán de Navío*, 88. Historians, particularly Argentineans, have maintained that these actions constituted a treaty by which Hawaii became the first nation to recognize Argentina's independence. The documents Bouchard gave the King were forgeries, however, and even the customarily self-promoting Bouchard does not mention a formal agreement but only the return of the sloop. He was merely a privateer and had no authority to sign treaties nor act as a commander of naval forces. The apparent source for this misinformation is Marine Ensign José

María Piris:

We celebrated a Treaty of Union for peace, war and commerce, and the King was obliged to return to our government all the ships that would arrive in that coast, such as the *Chacabuco* and to give us men and assistance whenever we asked for our needs, recognizing thus our Independence.

Piris, untitled manuscript, Armario 1, cajón 16, Archivo Mitre, Buenos Aires.

- 10 Peter Corney, *Early Voyages in the North Pacific*, (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1965), 121. He states that *Chacabuco*'s new complement numbered 100.
- 11 Argentinean and Chilean privateers operated under the Spanish *Ordenanza del Corso*, under which licenses were issued for a limited time, one year in Bouchard's case. The law also stipulated that captured vessels be taken to the privateer's home port to be condemned as prizes.
- 12 Guerra, Doc. Hist. Cal. MS. III, 110. Bancroft, 223. *Clarion*'s American captain Henry Gyzelaar was a friend of de la Guerra's, despite the fact that the Commandant had arrested him in 1816 when his ship *Lydia* was caught smuggling at Refugio. O'Dowd, "Pirates and Patriots," 11. Mitre, and later Ratto, claim that *Clarion* carried artillery and ammunition. See Ratto, *Capitán de navío*, 50.
- 13 Solá, "Instrucción General a los Comandantes sobre lo que debe practicarse contra los Insurgentes," 1818, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- 14 The privateers had stopped en route to trade with Russians from whom they obtained eggs, oil and other supplies.
- 15 The castillo stood on the site of the present Monterey presidio, while the battery was near where the old customs building stands today. The guns were initially commanded by Lt. Manuel Gómez; when he returned to the castillo to take command there, the artillerymen on the beach were led by Ensign José Jesús Vallejo, older brother of a future California governor. Vallejo's actions are described in Juan Alvarado, "Recuerdos históricos y personales tocantes a la Alta California," Bancroft Library, MSS. I, 182-241.
- 16 Argentinean authors stress that Corney anchored too close to the castillo, but actually, Corney did not anchor too close, but had simply not reckoned on Solá's new battery.
- 17 The landing party was led by Lt. Sheppard, one of the ship's officers; apparently because Bouchard distrusted marine commandant Piris he frequently put a naval officer in command of landing parties.
- 18 Antonio María Osio, *The History of Alta California*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 46. Gómez allegedly ordered a cease-fire out of compassion for the sailors, but Solá, fearing an enemy trick, ordered continued firing. When the shore battery resumed firing, Gómez, furious at being disobeyed, ordered the castillo to fire on the battery!
- 19 Bouchard, "Diario," n.p.
- 20 Extensive firsthand accounts describe the Monterey attack from both sides. See also "Noticias de lo acaecido en este puerto de Monterey con dos fragatas pertenecientes a los rebeldes de Buenos Ayres, 1818," MS XX, 70, and "Testimonio de dos prisioneros acerca de los Insurgentes de Bouchard, 1818," MS XLIX, 70, both in the Provincial State Papers, California State Archives, Sacramento.
- 21 Bouchard, "Diario," n.p.
- 22 Osio, *History of Alta California*, 46.
- 23 Prisoner Joseph Chapman claimed to have been impressed in Hawaii and wanted to desert; others claim he was Corney's second in command. He became a distinguished and useful California resident.
- 24 Father Seán to Father Baldomero López, January 2, 1819, Hacienda, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City. The raid caused at least one mission *asistencia*, or outlying chapel and farm, to be permanently abandoned: that of Santa Gertrudis, belonging to Seán's mission. Missionaries' war efforts are described in Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. 2, 236.
- 25 The Ortega rancho was a known haven for smugglers. It was suspected that the alcoholic Molina had provided the pirates with this information.
- 26 Taylor probably joined the privateers in Hawaii. Bealer, "Bouchard," 144.
- 27 Bouchard claimed that he offered to pay for the supplies, but a note, probably in his own handwriting, demands the delivery of 20 sacks of potatoes, 10 sacks of wheat and 4 cows. "If this contribution is met, I will retreat without causing any damage..." Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- 28 Corney, *Early Voyages*, 161.
- 29 Argentinean historians have claimed that they blockaded San Blas and Acapulco, or that he captured Acapulco, but no such events appear in Mexican sources.
- 30 Legajo 33, México 14, Documents 3 and 4, pp. 1-2, Audiencia de Guadalajara, AGI, Sevilla. With two exceptions, all Pacific privateers in these wars were Chilean.
- 31 Bouchard, "Diary," n.p.
- 32 Bouchard gave Cochrane, San Martín and O'Higgins many headaches, for American and English representatives complained to Chile's government during preparations for the crucial final expedition to Perú. The court martial is summarized in Teodoro Callet-Bois, *El proceso de Bouchard* (Buenos Aires, 1936).
- 33 Death certificate, issued at the San Javier Hacienda, Perú, January 6, 1837. Former subordinate Peter Corney had died the previous year in England, cheated by Bouchard, he claimed, of his share of the plunder.



Born the son of a French inkeeper, Bouchard has risen to the status of national hero in Argentina.

Bust in Pirates! In Story & History; courtesy of the Government of Argentina; photo by John Wright

“A more villainous set of faces I never saw”

Encounters Between Captains’ Wives and Pacific Pirates, 1831-1883

Joan Druett



Malays like this Ilanun man were the most feared marauders in Asian seas by the mid-1800s. Whether he deserves to be labeled a pirate is an open question, for attacks on ships were often sanctioned by local authorities. Baffled by European attitudes, the Sultan of Johor explained in the 1830s that “Piracy is our birthright, and so brings no disgrace.”

“The Malays are a piratical, bloodthirsty people: under the frenzying influence of opium they execute deeds of violence & of blood!” wrote Dr. John Wilson, surgeon of the London South Seas whaler *Gipsy* in May 1840, when the vessel was cruising off the northern shore of the island of Timor in the Flores Sea. A little later he added, “upon the little shrub covered rock called Pulo-Batto or Batto rock, a merchant-captain lies buried who was slain in defending his vessel against an attack made by a set of Malay Pirates.” Equally nervous was Dr. Robert Smith Owen of the South Seaman *Warrens*, writing in December 1837 while traversing the Celebes Sea, “here the Malay pirates are so plentiful we think it prudent therefore to prepare our guns &c. in case of a surprise.”¹

Such entries are common in the journals written by those who voyaged in the South China Sea. Here, there is a long history of sea-raiding by the Malay peoples, whose native craft, the *prau*—a long, narrow vessel, usually with an outrigger, propelled by oars and a large triangular or quadrilateral lateen sail—is naturally fast and admirably suited for piracy. Indeed, in times of strife and privation, maritime looting has often been the only means of economic survival, and traditionally easy to get away with. In a vast sea dotted with remote islands and bays, deserted except for the occasional *prau*, native *pinisi* schooner, Chinese junk, or lumbering South Seaman, apprehension was unlikely. Once the vessel they seized was set adrift or sunk, the pirates were indistinguishable from innocent fishermen.

Accordingly, any fishing *prau* was an object of nervous suspicion, for the captains—and surgeons—of South Seamen were acutely aware that knives, pointed bamboo stakes, and the local curved short sword, or *kris*, were to be found on all such craft. Captains’ wives were equally conscious of the hazards, for stories of pirate attack abounded, both at home and on voyage. In August 1831, having arrived at the island of Celebes (now Sulawesi), Eliza Underwood, wife of Captain Michael Underwood of the London whaler *Kingsdown*, was regaled with just such a sensational account. Mr. Burns, a compradore (ship’s agent) had just come home to the Celebes port of Manado from Ambon, where he had been conducting a very satisfactory trade in muskets. Because business had gone so well, he told Eliza, he had been carrying an unusual amount of cash: three thousand rupees (about \$1500), and a large amount of gold as well. In view of this, it is not surprising that his spirits plunged when

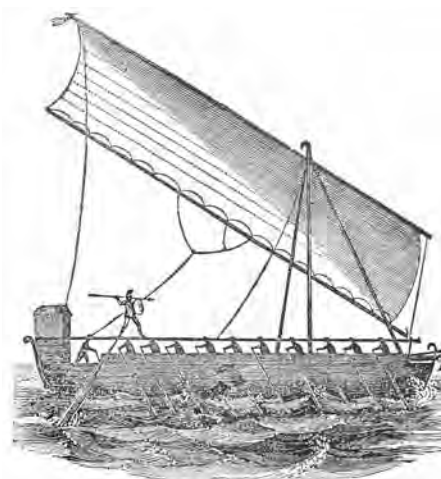
he spied “seven Maggandanna prows” steering for his small and leaky old schooner.²

According to Eliza’s retelling of his story, these “Maggandanna” pirates—actually Ilanun, for they hailed from Illana Bay, Mindanao—had a particularly savage reputation, for “their custom is when they take prisoners to braise their knees and elbows every day by hard blows so as to keep them too stiff to make their escape till they can dispose of them.” The unfortunate comrade took the best evasive action he could think of, steering close to the nearest beach, hoping that the large pirate vessels with their deeper draft would not be able to follow. However, the instant his schooner made shallow water, his entire crew jumped overboard and ran for their lives. Aghast, Mr. Burns sat alone in his boat as they dashed to the shore and vanished into the jungle, “looking on them in utter despair.”

The Ilanuns hove to within gunshot, and called out to him to surrender and deliver. Instead, Mr. Burns gathered his wits, a cutlass, and “a great parcel” of rupees, and jumped overboard himself. He made it to shore a few yards ahead of the pirates, demonstrating the stuff of which resourceful traders were made. Dumping the coins from his bag at the edge of the trees, he sprinted off into the jungle in the wake of his crew—and “as he had hoped, they staid scrambling for the money,” allowing him to escape. It was a desperate (and expensive) ploy, but it worked. Mr. Burns had lost his money, his muskets, and his ship, but at least he came out of it with his hide intact. It is easy to imagine Eliza Underwood clasping her hands to her breast in mingled sympathy and congratulation—and easy, too, to picture seafaring wives like Eliza relating similar stirring yarns to a breathless audience, once safely at home.

There were so many stories like these in contemporary periodicals that it is understandable that, when the bride of Captain Alonzo Follansbee boarded the Boston merchantman *Logan* for her honeymoon voyage in May 1837, she felt disconcerted to find one wall of the captain’s cabin “lined with muskets, pistols, cutlasses and boarding pikes.”³ The new Mrs. Follansbee was “horror-struck” when her husband lightly informed her that they were bound for the Straits of Sunda—the same notorious shoals where many men like Mr. Burns had endured encounters with Malay pirates. Accordingly, it must have been quite a moment when the man at the masthead of the *Logan* called out, “Pirate vessel in sight!” at dawn on April 22, 1838. The merchantman was becalmed, while the pirate *prau* had the distinct advantage of being propelled by oars. “Our cannon, swivel guns and pistols were soon got in readiness,” Mrs. Follansbee recounted, “swords, cutlasses, boarding pikes and ammunition hustled on deck ready for them.”

“There seemed little chance for us, as they were gaining on us every moment.” By five in the afternoon the pirates were less than a mile away, and Mrs. Follansbee tried to comfort herself by recalling that she “had practiced loading and firing guns and pistols at targets all the way out.” Her tightlipped husband informed her that her marksmanship “would be of little use,” however, for the crew of the *Logan* was vastly outnumbered. Even more depressingly, he went on to inform her that when she fell into the pirates’ hands, she could be sure that her fate “would be worse than death.” But, by the grace of God, “a good breeze sprang up, and we were soon out of their reach.”⁴



A Malay *prau*

New Zealand’s **Joan Druett** is the internationally known author of twelve books, several of which, including *Petticoat Whalers*, *Hen Frigates* and *She Captains*, are concerned with the maritime roles of women. Her latest, *Rough Medicine*, delves into the history of surgery at sea. Joan has just been awarded a year’s research fellowship at the University of New Zealand.



As Captain Babcock sailed the clipper *Young America* to Shanghai, his wife experienced pirates firsthand.

Courtesy of the artist, Ron Druett

Follansbee was by no means the only master to have that “fate worse than death” in mind. In January 1851 the news reached Hobart that the Tasmanian whaler *Flying Fox* had run onto an uncharted reef off Sydenham Island in the Kingsmill Group (in modern Kiribati), and natives had swarmed onto the wreck, intent on plunder. According to some accounts, the owner of the vessel, Captain Brown, was knocked on the head and his wife was carried off as a slave, to meet “a destiny worse than death.” However, it seems that Mrs. Brown was spared by her husband’s quick thinking, for he dressed her in dungarees and passed her off as a man.⁵

Charlotte Babcock, married to the captain of the famous clipper *Young America*, experienced a dramatic and unusual encounter with Chinese pirates. The episode commenced in late 1854 when she was on shore in Shanghai, where she had been left by her husband to get on with bearing her third daughter. Everything went well, but then, when the baby was about a month old, Charlotte received instructions from Captain David Babcock to charter a steam tug, and travel with it to Ning-Po, some distance down the coast, where he was waiting with the ship.

This was no small order, but Charlotte dutifully complied. Captain Dearborn, who was in command of the steamboat she hired, carried his wife and small child as well, which Charlotte found pleasant. The quarters, however, were cramped and hot, and Mrs. Dearborn was revoltingly seasick. Then, when they arrived at Ning-Po, the *Young America* was nowhere to be seen. As Charlotte found out later, her husband had sailed to Shanghai without the assistance of the tug when the wind unexpectedly improved. In fact, the steamboat must have passed the *Young America* in the night.⁶

The cavalier attitude of his fellow American must have annoyed Captain Dearborn greatly. Not only had he missed out on his towage fee, but he was stuck with Babcock’s wife and screaming baby. Glumly, he turned back for Shanghai, but was intercepted by a Chinese merchant vessel flying a flag of distress. The Chinese captain spoke no English, and Dearborn did not speak or understand Chinese, but the river pilot he had just taken aboard acted as interpreter.

Thus, Dearborn learned that the Chinese merchant had been robbed of a bag of gold by pirates, whose junk was still in sight. The merchant offered a fat fee for retrieving the treasure, a bargain the steamboat master agreed to readily. Without any more ado he chugged off in pursuit, ordering his cannon run out, and ignoring the nervous protests of his passenger.

One shot across the bows was enough to bring about the junk’s surrender, which tends to raise one’s suspicions about the story the Chinese merchant had spun. Mrs. Babcock, however, felt no doubts at all. “A more villainous set of faces I never saw,” she declared when she saw the twenty-two “pirates” paraded on deck. And it was such a pleasure to see the Chinese merchant’s delight!—“he laughed and jabbered, rubbed his hands, and said, ‘Hi yah!’ and when they recovered his bag of gold seemed unable to contain his joy.”

The rapture was short-lived. When the merchant called out that it was to be thrown to him from the deck of the junk, “by some stupidity it was thrown *short*, and fell into the water.” His plunge into despair, according

to her story, was terrible to view, but meanwhile two of the junk's crew had jumped overboard and drowned, rather to Captain Dearborn's chagrin, as live pirates were worth a bounty. Hastily, he steamed back to Ning-Po to hand over the remaining twenty—much to Charlotte's annoyance, for she was anxious to get back to Shanghai. However, within hours of arriving at Ning-Po the pirates had all been beheaded, and Dearborn was free to leave. There had been no kind of trial, but Charlotte saw no harm in that, merely observing, "Chinese justice is summary, but they well deserved their fate." After all, as she had remarked a few weeks before, after viewing three chopped heads on poles, "there are such multitudes of them, a few killed here and there are seldom missed."⁷ Though this seems callous, it was a typical response from a woman of Charlotte Babcock's time, social class, and background, when faced with the mass of Chinese humanity.

Equally pragmatic was the wife of the master of the tea clipper *Living Age*, which sailed full-tilt onto a reef in the South China Sea on New Year's Eve, 1855, and hung there, impaled and helpless. In the midst of the panic, glimpsing what he took to be a large junk approaching, one of the men screamed, "The pirates are waiting for daylight to come aboard and murder us!" Hysteria reigned—but then Mrs. Robert P. Holmes hove into sight on deck, dressed in "trousers turned up at the heels, a roundabout jacket ... short hair and cap, and armed with a dirk." Her demeanor was perfectly matter-of-fact. Embarrassed by her coolness, the crew made an effort to control themselves.⁸

As day dawned, it became apparent that the "approaching" junk was another wreck, but when the ship's company managed to make its way from the reef to the island, they found it littered with human skeletons, apparently mute evidence of recent pirate depredations. Luckily, they remained unmolested until February 25, 1856, when rescue finally arrived. Throughout the emergency, Mrs. Holmes's nerve did not fail her—but once she returned home, she flatly refused to go to sea again.

One of the most arduous challenges was faced by Mrs. Brown, wife of the master of the English South Seaman *Henrietta*.⁹ On June 7, 1860, when the ship was anchored off the seemingly tranquil



Chinese pirates remained active over a century after Charlotte's encounter, as this photo attests, taken aboard a pirate junk bearing down on its prey.

From I Sailed with Chinese Pirates, 1931, SDMM Library

island of Isabella in the Coral Sea, Captain Brown sent a boat and six men to shore with orders to cut firewood. Just one returned, swimming to the ship with the ghastly news that the woodcutting party had been ambushed, and the rest of the men slaughtered. Within moments they were boarded by a rush of islanders, intent on seizing the ship. Brown and his wife escaped to the cabin, “where they kept up a constant firing” until the pirates retreated to their canoes, but not before kidnapping “one of the children, a fine little boy about five years old.” The Browns never saw the child again.¹⁰

Equally bloody was the unfortunate experience of Mrs. “Sunrise” Clarke, a remarkable woman who had sailed on every voyage since marrying Captain Robert K. “Sunrise” Clarke at the age of nineteen.¹¹ Just before Christmas in 1885, she and their five-year-old daughter Carrie were with him on the big 1,647-ton windjammer *Frank N. Thayer* sailing from Manila for New York with a cargo of hemp and tar.

It was an almost entirely new crew. Cholera had broken out, and Clarke had been forced to leave most of his men ashore in the hospital. Their replacements were local Malays, who became discontented soon after the New Year, on account of some rather summary medical care handed out by the captain to one of their number. The Malay seaman recovered, but nevertheless he and his friends planned to take the ship. Then, one dark night in January, they acted.

First, they seized the quarterdeck, cutting the helmsman’s throat with a lance and tossing the body overboard. When the captain came up on deck to find out why his ship had fallen off the wind, he was slashed across the ribs. Mrs. Clarke, hearing shrieks, dashed up the companionway just in time to grab the assailant’s arm before he could thrust the lance again, and thus saved her husband’s life.

“But by that time all hell was loose on the ship,” reminisced one of the survivors, Andy Harris, decades after the event. Not only had he and the regular seamen retreated in disarray to the forecabin and the rigging, completely demoralized by the bloody slaughter of the first and second mates, but the cargo of tar and hemp had been set afire. Matters looked exceedingly grim, so much so that Clarke handed two loaded revolvers to his wife,

Merchant captains had reason to be wary of even the most innocent-looking Malay *praus*.

Courtesy of the artist, Ron Druett



with the instructions to use them on herself and Carrie before falling into the hands of the pirates. Like Alonzo Follansbee, he had “a fate worse than death” in mind. “By the grace of God I’ll do it!” Mrs. Clarke was heard to vow.¹²

Instead, however, she held off the mutineers while the largest boat was hastily launched. At last they pulled away, with the captain, his family, and the original crewmen aboard, several of them injured. “Sunrise” himself was so severely wounded that his left lung protruded six inches through the hole the lance had cut in his chest. His wife pushed the slippery organ back inside and bound the gash with strips of cloth, sewing them tightly in place. Clarke survived the ordeal, “but only because of his good wife’s constant care,” Harris claimed. Mrs. Clarke otherwise devoted her attention to her little girl, Carrie, who had remained silent and still throughout the bloody mutiny, and was equally quiet during the two-hundred-mile escape to St. Helena in the open boat. But then, in the words of the captain’s wife, “Carrie was a well behaved child the whole time.” Indeed, both mother and daughter were remarkably stoic—quite a contrast to Eliza Underwood, wife of the captain of the *Kingsdown*, when faced with a similar challenge back in the year 1831.

Just three weeks after listening to the nerve-wracking story told by Mr. Burns the compradore, the circumstances of his yarn must have come back to Eliza vividly, with all their ghastly implications. Matters could scarcely have been worse. Her ship was stranded in a hostile bay, where the flames of fires lit by piratical Malays on shore leapt up into the night-time sky. Captain Underwood was bedridden with an attack of gout, completely incapable of taking charge of the quarterdeck. Many of the men were crippled with scurvy.

Being in need of fresh fruit and vegetables, the *Kingsdown* had ventured too close to one of the Lesser Sunda Islands, which Eliza knew to be inhabited by “a very savage tribe—said to be cannables,” and the ship had become becalmed in “a bay or bite as the sailors call it.”¹³

...not long after that, I perceived that the ship had been going about. I rushed up on deck, and to my great dismay found we were in an even worse situation than before. The breeze is so light it only just enables us to stem the current, which means that, if a calm overtakes us, we shall certainly drift in shore among the savages. The night was made ghastly with my trembling fears. I did not dread the pirates of Makassar nearly so much as the natives of this coast, for [these] are wild wretches

who do not even spare their own race; they sacrifice life for the sheer joy of it, or to furnish their horrible meals. It is little wonder that a timid woman should dread the thought of falling into their hands.¹⁴

This, the entry for Saturday, September 24, 1831, is the last in Eliza’s journal. She ends, “I hope I shall close my next book with a more pleasing reflection, surely I shall for the next will close in London, but yet I have much to dread.” From this point on Mrs. Underwood vanishes from the historical record; it is impossible to tell whether she started another book—or even survived this nerve-wracking situation. However, if this “timid” woman indeed returned to London, her stories would have been guaranteed to chill the hearts of sister seafarers who were outward bound to the pirate-ridden shoals of the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea.

NOTES

- 1 John Wilson, *The Cruise of the ‘Gipsy’: The Journal of John Wilson, Surgeon on a Whaling Voyage to the Pacific Ocean 1839-1843*. Honore Forster, ed. (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1990); Robert Owen Smith, untitled journal kept on *Warrens* of London, 1837-40, n.p., Kendall Whaling Museum.
- 2 Eliza Underwood, untitled journal, n.p., Dixon Library, New South Wales, Australia.
- 3 Mrs. Alonzo Follansbee (Christian name unknown), diary kept on *Logan* 1837-39, #656 1837-L, n.p. Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. Also see Joan Druett, *Hen Frigates: Wives of Merchant Captains Under Sail* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).
- 4 Follansbee, “Diary.”
- 5 J. E. Philp, *Whaling Ways of Hobart Town* (Hobart, Tasmania, Australia: Walch, 1936), 41.
- 6 Charlotte A. Noyes Babcock, “Life on the Ocean Wave: Reminiscences of my Voyages Around the World, 1851-8,” typescript transcription, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Suzanne J. Stark, “Mates at Sea: The Adventures of 19th-Century Captains’ Wives,” *Seaport* XX no. 1 (Spring 1986): 29. Mrs. Holmes first name is unknown.
- 9 Mrs. Brown’s first name is also unknown.
- 10 “Horrible Massacre of a Crew of A South Sea Whaler.” *New Bedford Whalemens’ Shipping List & Merchants’ Transcript*, January 1, 1861.
- 11 Mrs. Clarke’s first name is unknown.
- 12 Edith Derby Robinson, “Mutiny on the *Thayer*,” *Long Island Forum*, May 1941, pp. 107-108.
- 13 Eliza’s original spelling has been retained.
- 14 Underwood, “journal.” Also see Joan Druett, *Rough Medicine: Surgeons at Sea in the Age of Sail* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

“The eyes of men grew

China’s Female Pirate Chieftain and Twentieth Century Authors

Dian Murray

A fanciful depiction of Mrs. Cheng, from *The Pirate’s Own Book*, 1836



Dian Murray is a professor of History at Notre Dame and a leading authority on Chinese piracy; her 1987 *Pirates of the South China Coast, 1790-1810* has been republished in Beijing. She co-authored *The Origin of the Tiandihui: The Chinese Triads in Legend and History*, and has published over twenty articles. What began as a quest for an engaging dissertation topic has led to years of sleuthing through archives worldwide. Today, Dian keeps a vigilant lookout for pirates while paddling her kayak along the shores of Lake Michigan and South Carolina’s barrier islands.

One of the most fearsome pirate fleets ever to sail was commanded not by a Blackbeard or a Bartholemew Roberts, but by a Chinese woman. That woman, Cheng I Sao (Ching Yih Sao), has captured the imaginations of Western authors more than any other Chinese pirate, perhaps because Western perceptions of seafaring as an exclusively male occupation created an inordinate interest in her life—an obsession that was not reflected in China’s own history and literature.¹ During the 1920s and early 1930s, two writers, one an important historian and the other a popular non-fiction author, both wrote about her. Philip Gosse’s now-classic 1932 *History of Piracy* and Joseph Gollomb’s 1928 *Pirates Old and New* projected onto this woman views of China as a mysterious, exotic, dangerous and alluring place, a fascination which colored and distorted their subsequent portrayals.² The notion of a female pirate chieftain swayed not only popular non-fiction writers like Gollomb, but also to a lesser degree affected historians such as Gosse. Their focus says a great deal more about Western fantasies

confused”

and stereotypes of the day than it does about the actual pirate leader herself, a contrast revealed most clearly when one compares the elaborate imaginings of Gosse and Gollomb with the original source materials on which they based their work.²

Chinese piracy, though largely a male enterprise, did include women. Cheng I Sao, literally, “wife of Cheng I,” became the leader of the Seven Flag Fleet, a confederation that arose in China during the aftermath of the Tay-son rebellion in Vietnam. At that time, pirates from China served the Tay-son as privateers and helped them unite Vietnam for the first time in centuries. In 1802 when the Tay-son were defeated, the pirates returned to their homes in China. Cheng I (Ching Yih), the husband of Cheng I Sao, emerged as the leader of the surviving pirates, and five years after his death in 1807, Cheng I Sao herself assumed leadership and headed the pirate confederation’s largest squadron, the Red Flag fleet. At its peak, the confederation numbered between 40,000 and 60,000 individuals, eight hundred large junks and nearly a thousand smaller ones.³

There were two primary sources about these pirates in English to which both Gosse and Gollomb claim to have availed themselves. The first of these, Yuan Yun-lun (Yuen Yung-lun)’s book *Ching bai-fen chi* was published in Canton in 1830 and translated into English the following year by Charles Friedrich Neumann as *History of the Pirates Who Infested the China Sea from 1807 to 1810*. This unofficial history was composed by an employee of the Governor General’s *yamen* (the headquarters or residence of a government official) who was acquainted with several of those killed combating the pirates. Grief-stricken, Yuan Yun-lun felt compelled to write an “objective” account to preserve the lessons of the pirates’ ravages and the spirit of those who died at their hands for posterity. His book is based on eyewitness accounts from individuals who engaged the pirates directly, and focuses primarily on the activities of the Red, Black and White flag fleets whose members sailed the seas between Macao and Canton. Cheng I Sao’s leadership is mentioned in conjunction with their operations, but the presence of this female leader aroused little comment.⁴



The involvement of women in piracy fascinated Westerners like this photographer, who posed La Choi San on her pirate junk in the late 1920s.

From I Sailed with Chinese Pirates, 1931, SDMM Collection



“Ladrones” in action.

From *The Pirate's Own Book*, 1836

SDMM Collection

However, a foreshadowing of later Western romanticization was already manifest in Charles Neumann’s translation, for in endeavoring to capture in English the spirit of the pirates’ *noms de guerre*, Neumann misread or mistranslated many of their names. For instance, the nickname for Green squadron leader Wu Chih-ch’ing was “Tung haepa” (Tung-hai Pa), translated by Neumann as “Scourge of the Eastern Sea.” However, Tung Hae, or Eastern Sea, was the name of Woo’s native village in Kwangtung province, and in this case the character *pa* means “uncle,” “elder” or “earl.” Instead of “Scourge of the Eastern Sea,” his nickname could be rendered more accurately, if prosaically, as “Uncle from Eastern Sea Village.”⁵

The second well-known English account is *A Brief Narrative of My Captivity and Treatment Amongst the Ladrones* by Richard Glasspoole, who was an officer on a British East India Company ship. (*Ladrone* was the Portuguese term for the pirates.) Glasspoole and seven other British seafarers were captured in September 1809 and held by the pirates for three months. His diary of this adventure, prepared for the Company, was signed the day after his release. It describes several battles and the movement of the pirates up the various branches of the Pearl and West Rivers to “levy contributions on the towns and villages.”⁶



When read together the two sources tell a fascinating story of the rise and fall of this confederation, which—aside from some errors in the English translations—is entirely consistent, so much so that one may lay them side by side and track the pirates’ daily progress throughout Glasspoole’s captivity. Our two twentieth century versions, however, stray far from these sources as a result of the ways their authors misread, misconstrued and added to these texts. The result has seriously distorted what Western audiences learned of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Chinese pirates. So great was the distortion that pirate histories became pirate stories. The authors’ embroidering of the facts clearly reveals the Western fantasies and stereotypes of the era.

Philip Gosse’s 1932 *History of Piracy* has provided a point of departure for nearly everyone with a serious interest in piracy, and although he refrained from sensationalizing his subject, Gosse failed to avoid simple factual errors that came from misreading his texts.⁷ The phenomenon of a female pirate clearly fascinated him, however, and occasioned the remark that Neumann’s book “is chiefly devoted to the exploits of one pirate, and that a woman.”⁸ In fact, neither the *Ching bai-fen chi* nor Neumann’s translation is chiefly devoted to the exploits of Cheng I Sao; in the Chinese text of 102 pages, her name appears only twenty-five times.

The one devoted to her exploits is Gosse, not Neumann.

Gosse introduces the commanders of the various fleets as “Bird and Stone,” “Scourge of the Eastern Sea,” “Jewel of the Whole Crew,” and “Frog’s Meal,” demonstrating a fidelity to his English-language source which serves only to perpetuate Neumann’s translation errors. Though Gosse errs in not having recognized that two other members of the Cheng family were important pirate leaders before Cheng I Sao even came on the scene, he cannot be accused of fabrication or of willful distortion of historical evidence. The Cheng I Sao he presents may even be said to be a respectful creation, for he makes her a good military strategist, disciplinarian, and “excellent business woman.”⁹

The same cannot be said of *Pirates Old and New* by Joseph Gollomb, who wrote popular non-fiction books on topics as diverse as Albert Schweitzer and spies. While lacking Gosse’s scholarly pretensions, Gollomb’s error-plagued account was nonetheless influential; his chapter entitled “Mrs. Ching Goes A-Pirating” was reprinted in N.C. Wyeth’s popular 1935 anthology of true pirate stories, *Marauders of the Sea*.¹⁰ Like Gosse, he based his account upon Neumann’s translation and Glasspoole’s captivity narrative.

The Cheng I Sao Gollomb imagined “was larger than the women of her



Prisoners await their fates aboard a pirate junk in the 1920s, whose armament differs little from that of Mrs. Cheng’s day.

From I Sailed with Chinese Pirates, 1931.



Chang Pao tsai is seated aboard a junk in this woodcut from the 1830 book *Ching-bai fen chi*. Unlike the Chinese, Westerners have been more interested in his wife Chang I Sao, of whom no image appears in the book.

race, gloriously formed and, says a Chinese historian, ‘before the beauty of her face the eyes of men grew confused,’” a remark Gollomb might have applied to himself.¹¹ His tale’s opening exemplifies the ethnic stereotyping prevalent among Westerners in the era, for he “nominates” the nearest Chinese laundryman to guide us to “far regions in which is set the strangest story in the annals of piracy.”¹² The laundryman, says Gollomb,

is our best guide if we want to see vividly the yellow pirates who will swarm through our story... He will help us visualize a people among whom it is womanly to wear trousers and virile to wear skirts... When in our story we go back only a little over a hundred years the difference between one of Mrs. Ching’s pirates and the man you see busy over the laundry ironing board is largely only a matter of clothes.¹³

Revealingly, the year before Gollomb’s book appeared, a Chinese student who listed American perceptions of this “mysterious and inscrutable race” in a magazine article noted that Americans frequently remarked that “Chinese men wear skirts and women pants.”¹⁴ Just as Gollomb’s laundryman, a man in a Western woman’s role, is both unmanly yet potentially menacing, it is apparent from his account of the beautiful but deadly Cheng I Sao that her exotic inversion of the normal Western roles of the sexes is at the core of her allure.

Consider the role reversal of sexual power he writes into the initial encounter between “Hsi-Kai” (Cheng I Sao) and Chang Pao (Chang Paou), the commander of the Red fleet who became her paramour and ultimately her husband after Cheng I’s death:¹

The two fishermen [Chang Pao and his father] were seized and brought before Hsi-Kai for execution. . . . The young man crossed powerful bronzed arms over his deep chest, and with a grin of indifference looked the woman in the face. . . . He stood head and shoulders taller and broader than any of his captors, and the insolence in his flagrantly handsome face was such that Hsi-Kai could not dismiss it unnoticed. . . .

Hsi-Kai, however, who on so many other occasions was indeed the bringer of death, proved on this occasion that she was after all, a woman. From the very core of him to his finger tips he glowed with vitality, with such health as models face and body into form of beauty and makes of the spirit so robust a thing that even death cannot make it cower.

“Paou, how well do you know the sea?” she asked.

“Aside from women there is nothing I know better.”

She turned to her captains. “Sink their fishing boat,” she said. “Give the old man new garments and let him eat. And as for Paou, I will attend to him.”¹⁵

The original account by Yuan Yun-lung and his translator Neumann, however, presents a less lurid scene: Chang Pao was originally captured by Cheng I, and it was in his eyes, not those of his wife, that he initially found favor:

Chang Paou was a native of Sin hwy [Hsin-hui], near the mouth of the River, and the son of a fisherman. Being fifteen years of age, he went with his father

a fishing in the sea, and they were consequently taken prisoners by Ching yih, who roamed about the mouth of the river, ravaging and plundering. Ching yih saw Paou, and liked him so much, that he could not depart from him. Paou was indeed a clever fellow—he managed all business very well; being also a fine young man, he became a favorite of Ching yih and was made head-man or captain.¹⁶

The spectacle of a virile man under the power of a female pirate, however, was the ultimate example of Western norms upended. Besides the imaginary encounter with Chang Pao, Gollomb fabricates a meeting between her and the captive Richard Glasspoole, and implies that Glasspoole “knew of the personal relation between the pirate captain and Hsi-Kai” and thus “realized the delicacy of his own situation.” “It was,” according to Gollomb, “a question of which would prevail, Paou’s jealousy of any man whose smile interested Hsi-Kai or his fear of what Hsi-Kai would do should ‘some unfortunate accident’ happen to Homer [Glasspoole].”¹⁷ In fact, nowhere in Glasspoole’s narrative is there evidence that he even knew that a woman was in command of the pirates who captured him, much less met her.

Equally exotic (but also historically unfounded) is Gollomb’s version of the scene when she assumed leadership of the confederation after her husband Cheng I died:

Hsi-Kai arose before the assembled captains. She was dressed in the glittering garb of a male fighting chief; gold embroidered dragons writhed over gorgeous purples, blues, and reds; gay jade and green, bits of painted ivory, gold and silver shimmered and glittered in the sunlight. In her sash were some of her dead husband’s swords and on her head was his familiar war helmet.

“Look at me, captains!” she cried. They looked at her. “Your departed chief sat in council with me. Your most powerful fleet, the White, under my command, took more prizes than any other. Do you think *I* will bow to any other chief?”

There she was, in their eyes a goddess of a woman with a record of leadership as proud as any man’s. It is not surprising, therefore, that the captains of the fleet should rise as a single man and acclaim her their chief of chiefs.¹⁸

By contrast, the scene is sparsely depicted by Yuan Yun-lung and his translator Neumann:

It happened, that on the seventeenth day of the tenth moon, in the twentieth year of Kea king, Ching yih perished in a heavy gale, and his legitimate wife Shih placed the whole crew under the sway of Paou: but so that she herself should be considered the commander of all the squadrons together, for this reason the division [of] Ching yih was then called Ching yih saou, or the wife of Ching yih.¹⁹

Gollomb is equally imaginative in his discussion of what happened to the pirates after their surrender to the Chinese government:

Paou [Chang Pao] was made a mighty commander and by edict became a “Son of Heaven” and was allowed to wear peacock’s feathers with two eyes in sign of his exalted rank. And the unconquerable Hsi-Kai, whose beauty dimmed the eyes of all beholders, went to dwell in a great palace and bore three sons and one daughter to her beloved husband, Paou.²⁰



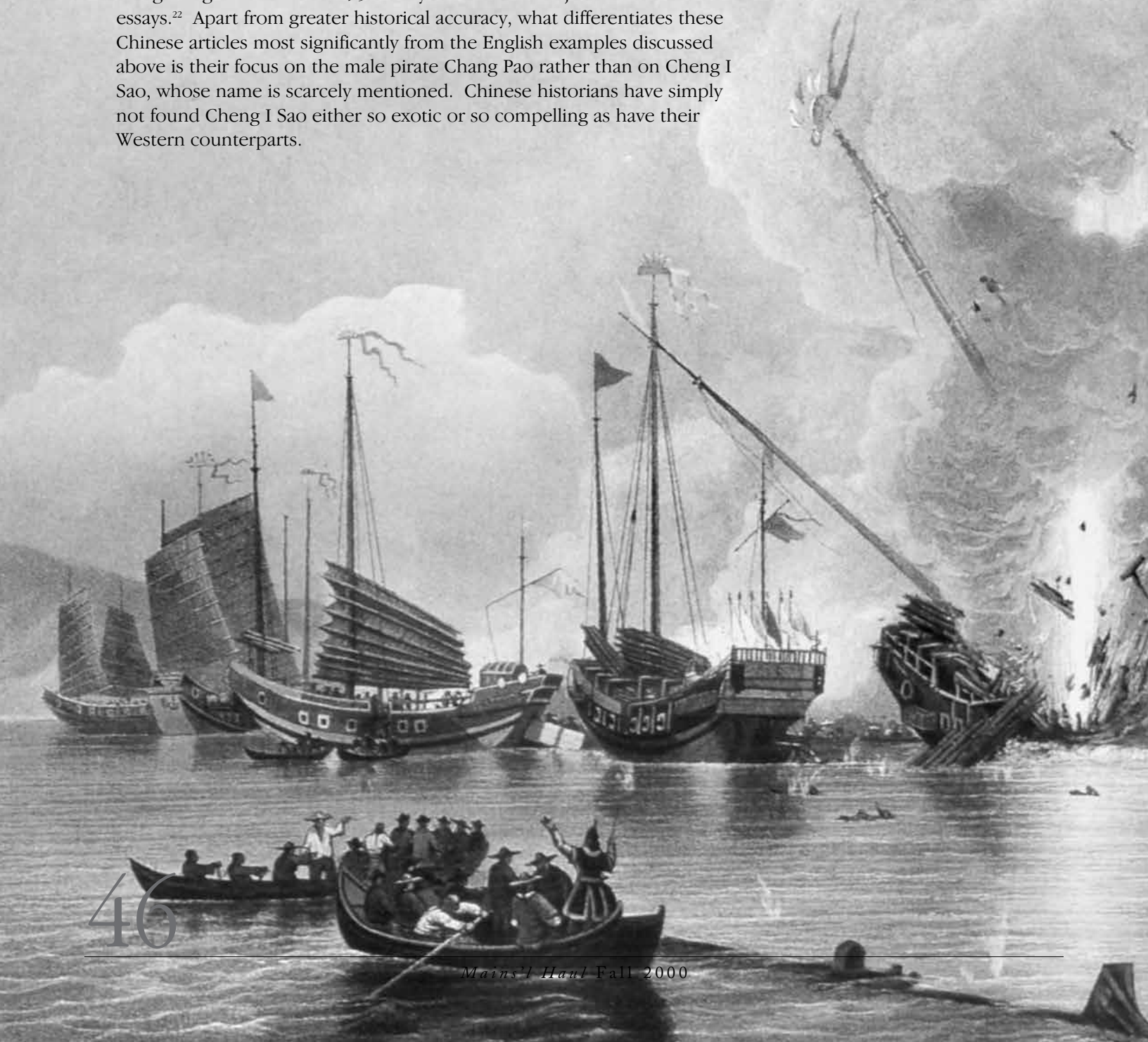
Fantasies about Mrs. Cheng seeped into 20th century pop culture.

Along with La Choi San, she probably inspired the Dragon Lady character in Milton Caniff’s memorable “Terry and the Pirates” comic strip in the late 1930s. Caniff re-imagines her as a beauty of mingled European and Chinese ancestry, both deadly and alluring to Anglo male characters.

Chang Pao assuredly did not become a “Son of Heaven;” only emperors received that title. The privilege of wearing double-eyed peacock feathers was granted only to government officials for extraordinary service to the empire. And in this instance, it was the Governor-General Pai Ling, and not Chang Pao, who was rewarded with them. Cheng I Sao does appear to have had a son as a result of her relationship with Chang Pao, but the claim that she lived in a palace and had three sons and a daughter is unfounded.

The portrayals of these pirates by Gosse and Gollomb contrasts greatly with Chinese perceptions, for in China, piracy is a subject that not only has not been glamorized, but is virtually unknown. Distorted and inaccurate though Western tales are, Cheng I Sao and her confederation have received more attention in the West than in China.²¹

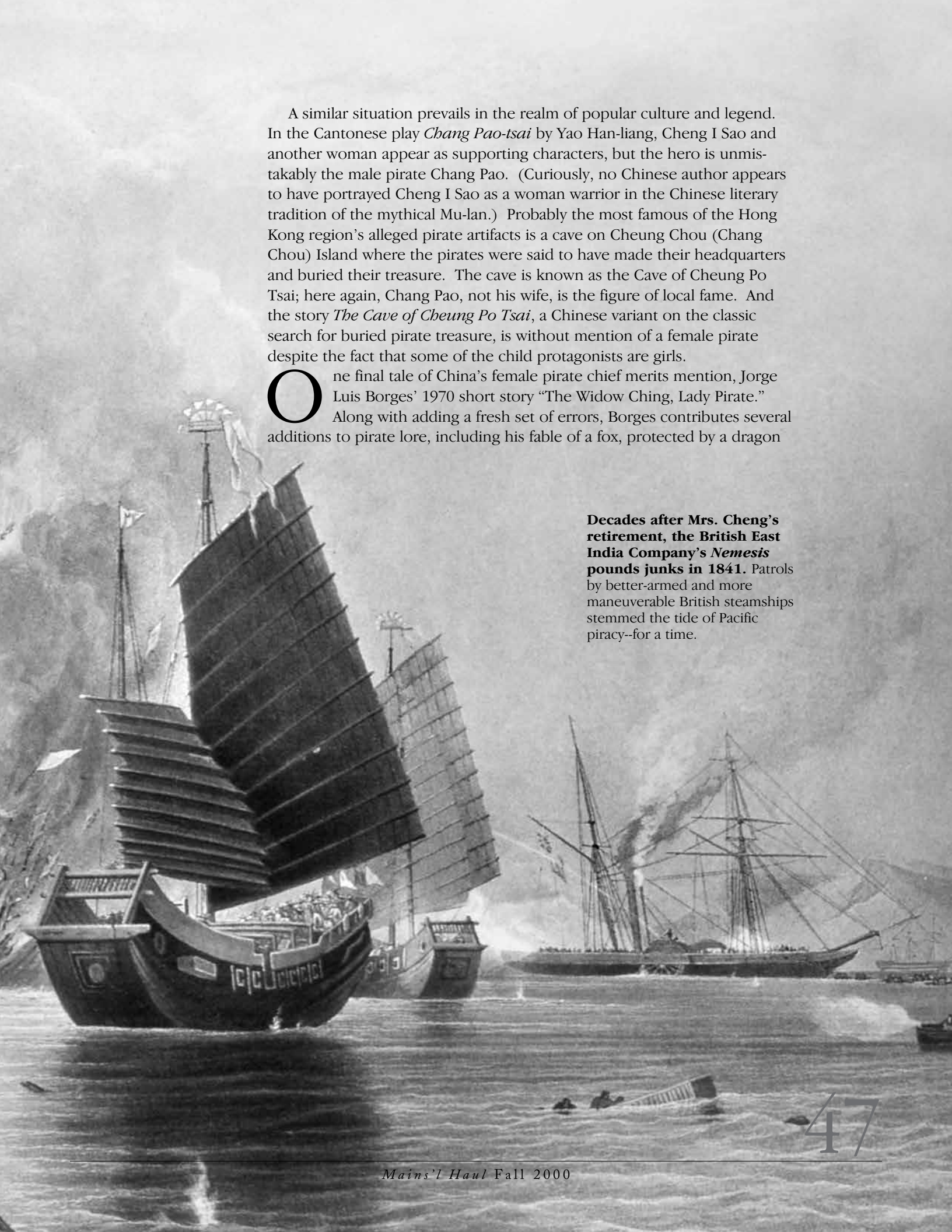
One region where the pirates were somewhat familiar, however, was Hong Kong. There in the 1950s they became the subject of two historical essays.²² Apart from greater historical accuracy, what differentiates these Chinese articles most significantly from the English examples discussed above is their focus on the male pirate Chang Pao rather than on Cheng I Sao, whose name is scarcely mentioned. Chinese historians have simply not found Cheng I Sao either so exotic or so compelling as have their Western counterparts.



A similar situation prevails in the realm of popular culture and legend. In the Cantonese play *Chang Pao-tsai* by Yao Han-liang, Cheng I Sao and another woman appear as supporting characters, but the hero is unmistakably the male pirate Chang Pao. (Curiously, no Chinese author appears to have portrayed Cheng I Sao as a woman warrior in the Chinese literary tradition of the mythical Mu-lan.) Probably the most famous of the Hong Kong region's alleged pirate artifacts is a cave on Cheung Chou (Chang Chou) Island where the pirates were said to have made their headquarters and buried their treasure. The cave is known as the Cave of Cheung Po Tsai; here again, Chang Pao, not his wife, is the figure of local fame. And the story *The Cave of Cheung Po Tsai*, a Chinese variant on the classic search for buried pirate treasure, is without mention of a female pirate despite the fact that some of the child protagonists are girls.

One final tale of China's female pirate chief merits mention, Jorge Luis Borges' 1970 short story "The Widow Ching, Lady Pirate." Along with adding a fresh set of errors, Borges contributes several additions to pirate lore, including his fable of a fox, protected by a dragon

Decades after Mrs. Cheng's retirement, the British East India Company's *Nemesis* pounds junks in 1841. Patrols by better-armed and more maneuverable British steamships stemmed the tide of Pacific piracy--for a time.





The wily Dragon Lady, in Milt Caniff's "Terry and the Pirates," fascinated a generation of comic strip readers.

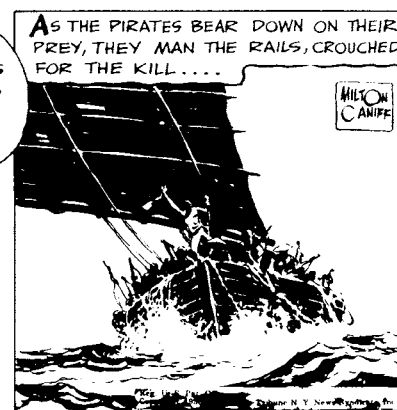
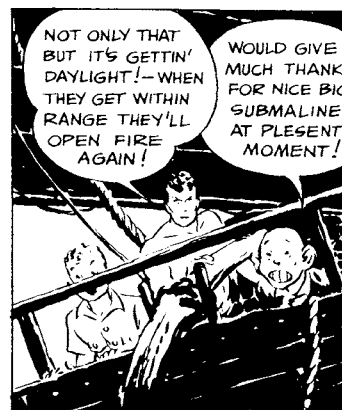
despite the fox's ingratitude.²³ (Here, Cheng I Sao is the fox, who, despite thirteen years of piracy, was ultimately pardoned by the "Imperial Dragon," the emperor.) In contrast to authors who have imagined the female pirate as a sensual, voluptuous beauty, Borges instead portrays her as exemplifying Oriental decadence, a "slinking woman, with sleepy eyes and a smile full of decayed teeth," whose "blackish, oiled hair shone brighter than her eyes."²⁴ Because so little is known about the actual Cheng I Sao, she can be re-imagined in any number of ways, to suit widely different Western visions of the East.

In the twentieth century, the character of Cheng I Sao has been a focal point on which Western authors, though not their Chinese counterparts, projected their fantasies of Chinese exoticism, sensuality, brutality, and a titillating inversion of Western norms in which a woman could rule over men in one of the manliest of all activities, piracy.

NOTES

- 1 Chinese names can be rendered into the Roman alphabet in a variety of ways, a frequent source of confusion to Western writers. This article will follow the "Wade-Giles" system, and when a name first appears, it will be followed with a common alternate spelling in parenthesis.
- 2 Earlier popular accounts of her exploits in English include Charles Ellms, *The Pirates Own Book* (Boston, 1837).
- 3 See Dian H. Murray, *Pirates of the South China Coast: 1790-1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).
- 4 One other firsthand Chinese account exists, the 1809 essay "Chi-ssu p'ing-k'ou" (Suppressing the Bandits) by Chu Ch'eng-wen. Written in Chinese, it was unknown to Gosse and Gollomb and was inaccessibly buried in the *Nan-hai hsien-chih* (Gazetteer of Nan-hai District), compiled in 1872 and reprinted in Taipei in 1971.
- 5 When their origins are understood, pirates' names lose their exoticism, instead being typical of monikers used throughout South China. Here people tended to address one another with references denoting their position within the family (Elder Brother, Younger Brother, First Son or Second Son), their place of origin, or something idiosyncratic about the way they looked and acted rather than by their given names.
- 6 Richard Glasspoole, *Mr. Glasspoole and the Chinese pirates; being the narrative of Mr. Richard Glasspoole of the ship Marquis of Ely* (London: Golden Gockerel Press, 1935), 6; originally published as "A Brief Narrative of My Captivity and Treatment Amongst the Ladrones" in George Wilkinson, ed. *Sketches of Chinese Customs and Manners in 1811-1812* (Bath: 1812). See also Glasspoole, "Substance of Mr. Glasspoole's Relation, Upon His Return to England, Respecting the Ladrones" in *Further Statements of the Ladrones on the Coast of China* (London, 1812), 44.
- 7 Gosse's most serious error lies in confusing Cheng I Sao's husband Cheng I (Ching Yi) with her distant cousin Cheng ch'i (Ching tsih), one of the pirates' major leaders during the time of their patronage by Vietnam's Tay-son dynasty. He also mistakenly attributes the pirates' code of conduct to her, when in fact they were by her subordinate Cheng Pao.
- 8 Philip Gosse, *The History of Piracy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1932), 271.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 272.
- 10 N.C. Wyeth, ed., *Marauders of the Sea* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935). Gollomb's errors are legion. He ignores the significance of ongoing cycles of petty piracy along the South China coast to the rise of Chinese piracy, and the influence of the Tay-son Rebellion on the Cheng family's activities. Instead, he portrays Cheng I as a master pirate who, through his own efforts, increased his fleet from a leaky row-boat and a dozen pirates to 1,800 vessels and 70,000 men.

- 11 Joseph Gollomb, *Pirates Old and New* (New York: The Macaulay Company, 1928), 277.
- 12 Ibid, 272-273.
- 13 loc. cit.
- 14 *Literary Digest*, 12 March 1927, as cited in Harold Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Views of China and India* (White Plains, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1980). First published 1958 by The John Day Company, New York), 118-119. For a further example of American attitudes toward the Chinese in the early 20th century, see Robert Lawson, *At That Time* (New York: Viking, 1947), 43-45.
- 15 Gollomb, *Pirates Old and New*, 282-283. "Hsi-kai" is Gollomb's peculiar romanization of Mrs. Cheng's given name, which Chinese sources give as Shih Hsiang-ku or Shih Yang.
- 16 Charles Friedrich Neumann, *History of the Pirates who Infested the China Sea from 1807 to 1810* (London, 1814), 12-13.
- 17 Gollomb, *Pirates*, 279-80. Gollomb misidentifies Richard Glasspoole as "Homer" throughout.
- 18 loc. cit. Chinese historians traditionally inserted imaginary dialogue into their accounts which they attributed to their subjects, usually with a didactic purpose and with moral instruction as their goal. These make-believe conversations also provided their authors with opportunities to express their personal feelings about their subjects. Gollomb does not differentiate between the conversations he quotes from Neumann's translation and those he has composed himself.
- 19 Neumann, *History*, 12-13.
- 20 Gollomb, *Pirates*, 308-309.
- 21 Until the author began working with the collections of the National Palace Museum in Taipei and later in the First Historical Archives in Beijing, China's rich archival sources regarding piracy had lain untouched. Chinese copies of *Ching bai-fen chi* were unavailable in public collections in Taipei or Hong Kong and were only rediscovered in the British Museum in 1976.
- 22 Yeh Lin-feng, "Chang Pao-tsai shih-chi k'ao" (Examination of the Affairs of Chang Pao-tsai), published serially in the *Hsiang-kang hsing-tao jib-pao* (Hong Kong Islands Daily), beginning 7 Aug. 1953; Hu Chieh-yu, "Hsi-Ying-P'ang yu Chang Pao-tsai huo-luan chih P'ing-ting" (Hsi-Ying-P'ang and the End of the Ravages of the Pirate Chang Pao-tsai) in Lo Hsiang-lin, ed. *I-pa-ssu-erb nien I-ch'ien chih Hsiang-kang chi ch'i-tui wai-chiao-t'ung* (Hong Kong and its External Communications Before 1842) (Hong Kong, 1959), 151-170.
- 23 Borges perpetuates several of Gosse's errors, and invents her marriage to another fleet commander after Chang Pao's death. He positions her within a Western sisterhood of female pirates that includes Mary Read and Ann Bonny, though he does not elaborate on what besides gender unites these pirates.
- 24 Jorge Luis Borges, "The Widow Ching, Lady Pirate," translated by Norman Thomas Di Giovanni, *A Universal History of Infamy* (New York: Dutton, 1970), 48.



MODERN ASIAN MARITIME CRIME

Samuel Pyeatt Menefee

A Royal Navy anti-pirate detail strikes an action pose in late 1920s Hong Kong.

From I Sailed With Chinese Pirates, 1931



A recent biennial general meeting of the British officer's union erupted in a verbal firefight over contemporary piracy:

The time has come to fight fire with fire, one delegate is alleged to have said, whilst another Master said there were times when safety regulations had to take a back seat. Other . . . comments apparently included "I am going to get guns for those guys," and "If I am going to get bumped off I am going to get a bullet or two away first." A tanker Master was also alleged to have declared that the ICC-Piracy Centre in Kuala Lumpur was a total waste of time and money, and should be shut down. "What good is someone in a command centre doing me when I am being attacked by hatchets and AK-47s" . . .¹

All is not peaceful in the Pacific, the former hunting grounds of Drake, Malay marauders, and Mrs. Cheng. Piracy in the Pacific, particularly in Southeast Asian waters and the China Seas, is alive, well, and—unfortunately for all with a stake in the region's commerce and stability—*thriving*.²

Figures on contemporary piracy are not totally reliable. There has been much debate over what should or should not be included in the term, whether violence is required, or if sneak theft should also count. Are *attempts* to be logged? And how can the theft of a wrist-watch or personal effects be compared with the hijacking of an entire cargo? Some Asian commentators have even suggested dropping the term "piracy" as pejorative, employing "armed robbery" or "robbery at sea" instead. Reportage by shipping firms also leaves something to be desired; the World Customs Organization in Brussels has concluded that attacks are under-reported to avoid regulatory delays, and perhaps a hike in insurance premiums. Countries drag their feet when asked to air their dirty laundry—one need only compare the figures offered by the International Maritime Organization to those prepared by the I.C.C.-International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a non-governmental agency. Even allowing for their broader definition, the IMB numbers are much

more comprehensive, but at the same time probably miss many raids on smaller local craft. For the seven years from 1994 through June of 2000, attacks in the Pacific region have annually topped ninety.³ While these figures indicate that we are indeed in troubled waters, they are less helpful in defining the scope and complexity of the problem.

A good example of this is the December, 1998 arrest of Chew Cheng Kiat (alias Mr. Wong) on Butam Island, Indonesia. He was implicated in the seizure of the *Pulau Mas*, a 399-ton tanker, the previous month, an incident which appears to represent piracy at a multi-national level. Mr. Wong confessed that he was involved in a syndicate responsible for the hijacking of almost a quarter of the twenty-one vessels reported to the Indonesian navy as having been commandeered between November 1996 and 1998.⁵¹ These included the *Suci*, boarded east of Singapore on November 19, 1996 by six armed men who hijacked the ship and set fifteen of her crew adrift, and the *Atlanta 95*, commandeered in the Arafura Sea on November 18, 1997 and hijacked to the Gulf of Thailand where her cargo of fuel was transhipped before the vessel was abandoned. Likewise, the *Petro Ranger* disappeared between Singapore and Ho Chi Minh City in late April of 1998, and was then detained by Chinese authorities with twelve alleged pirates aboard at Haikou on May 1; these men were not prosecuted, but repatriated.⁵¹ When the *Pulau Mas*, which served as a mother ship, was seized, fourteen masks and eighteen weapons were found, along with twelve containers of paint, and several ship and immigration stamps. Wong, a citizen of Singapore, allegedly employed Malaysians in his organization and was himself responsible to the syndicate head in China. According to Admiral Sunardi,

Mr. Wong's international network is placed in China, Hong Kong, [the] Philippines and Malaysia. Through the evidence gathered from [the] vessel, all hijacked vessels and cargo were sent to China. On board PULAU MAS they also found false ships' documents ready to be used on newly hijacked vessels. When a vessel was hijacked, Mr. Wong would change her entire crew. Mr. Wong also placed his crew on a targeted vessel. When the vessel entered international waters his men on board informed him [of] the route of the ship via hand phone.⁵¹

Wong was eventually convicted and jailed for six years in Indonesia. It is important to recognize that many of these attacks are not local, low-level Third World pilfering, but are part of sophisticated criminal schemes, involving multinational gangs acting in response to macro-economic factors. Just as the Chinese economy provides a useful destination for pirated cargo, there is little reason to doubt that the recent increase in Indonesian piracies is due to economic and political turmoil in that area.

It should also be noted that attacks are becoming more deadly, with a rise in crew fatalities. Twenty-three crewmen aboard the *Cheung Son*, which was hijacked in mid-November of 1998, were gathered on deck and riddled with machinegun bullets before being thrown overboard. Similarly, the Chinese and South Korean crewmen of the *Tengu Maru*, which disappeared late in 1998 and reemerged in Zhangjiang under a

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different name, are believed to have been murdered.

Piracies do not occur in a vacuum. While the hijacking of the *Tengu Maru* and the presumed murder of her crew might initially appear to be only a localized tragedy for the sailors' families, and an economic setback for her Japanese owners, the loss has caused the Nippon Foundation, a Japanese group dealing with maritime safety to propose a Northern Sea Route (NSR) to Europe as an alternative to the Straits of Malacca.⁵² Insurers such as BIMCO have protested to national governments and threatened to raise the problem of piracy with the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Non-governmental organizations such as the I.C.C.-International Maritime Bureau, with its Piracy Reporting Centre at Kuala Lumpur, have adopted a "carrot and stick" approach, highlighting cases in which national governments have avoided coming to grips with the problem, while praising government units which have responded promptly to reports of piracy.⁵² This prodding of governments must be done deftly, and is not without cost; Singapore reacted negatively to one individual's reasonable comment that although its own waters were remarkably clear of piracy, those electronic goods and other luxury items being lifted in the Straits of Malacca must be finding a market *somewhere*. Similarly, Indonesian enthusiasm for the work of the Piracy Reporting Centre has been tempered by the Centre's coverage of incidents in Indonesian waters. On other occasions, blame is diverted; thus government sources claimed that a pirate attack in Indonesian waters which left a British master dead was a mutiny. When complaints are raised on an international level, such as at the International Maritime Organization, the national response has usually been to duck and weave. A Chinese note in connection with a 1994 IMO fact-finding mission is not atypical:

The Chinese Government has investigated all incidents, which occurred along the Chinese coast in recent years. According Chinese sources, the incidents at sea were very complicated. The manifestations of the incidents were varied. Therefore it is not proper to regard all the incidents as "pirate attacks" without investigation and evidence."⁵² Perhaps not surprisingly, this reticence is matched by government's reluctance to hold other countries' feet to the fire. A rash of ship interceptions by pirates purporting to be Chinese government officials, which gave rise to an IMO mission, brought the following response:

The increased number of unlawful acts . . . may, in general terms be attributed to a combination of such factors as political developments, configuration of coast, large number of islands (many of which are unoccupied thus providing ideal places for pirates and armed robbers to hide), extensive uncharted areas, limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, etc.

Without belaboring this example of bureaucratise, it is interesting to see an *increase* in attacks blamed on static geographical features. While non-governmental organizations care about this problem, and will continue to raise it in multilateral international contexts, only rarely will governments stir matters up.

On a nation-to-nation level, the possibility of action is much greater; a mixed blessing, depending upon the response. During early 1993, for example, there was a concentration of attacks in the East China Sea—twenty in all, of which seventeen involved boardings and/or detentions



of Russian vessels. This resulted in the deployment of the Russian Federation Navy fleet in the region during the second quarter of the year to safeguard Russian interests.⁴ This would not be the first time that piracies and low-level harassment have served national interests; Rear Admiral J.R. Hill noted a similar pattern of maritime incidents in the confrontation between Indonesia and the newly formed nation of Malaysia several decades ago. Separatist Islamic groups in the Philippines such as the Moro National Liberation Front and, more recently, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf, have not been above resorting to piratical shakedowns to replenish their coffers. Similarly, while there may or may not be any direct relation to Philippine-Chinese territorial disputes over various island groups, consider the following:

During January 1996, the Philippine Navy engaged in an hour-and-a-half battle with two identified “pirate” ships (sinking one), 72 miles off Capona Island. According to *CCI*, “unconfirmed reports say the vessels involved bore Chinese flags. Manila described the vessels as pirates that victimised ships en route between China and Subic Bay.” The Chinese Foreign Ministry denied involvement but it is interesting that several . . . 1994 attacks were said to involve Chinese-looking individuals in army fatigues operating from “mother ships,” while a score of Chinese pirates were arrested during the following month in Philippine territory.

The potential for disaster when such piratical activities take place in a disputed area should be clear to all.

On a more positive note, Asiatic cooperation significantly reduces the level of piratical attacks. A prime example is the 1992 agreement between Indonesia and Singapore, allowing their navies and marine police the right of hot pursuit of pirates into each other’s territorial waters. Vessels from the two countries assist each other when pursuit is likely to cross territorial boundaries, while a joint coordinating committee of high level officers meet regularly to review progress. Despite an increase in such attacks following the East Asian financial crisis and Indonesian spending cuts, the agreement allowed patrols to be stepped up and has helped contain the problem.⁵³ Prospective links between Indonesia and Malaysia or among the three Strait states, as well as joint Indonesian-Philippine patrols suggest other ways in which this cooperation approach may bear fruit in the fight against piracy. ⁵³

The problem of piracy in Pacific waters might appear to be far from our shores, with little potential importance for the United States. While this seems to be supported by the small number of American flag vessels attacked—fewer than one per year—nothing could be further from the truth; maritime use of flags of convenience suggests that the number of American-owned ships involved may be far greater.⁵³ Nor can the impact of piracy on American seafarers be ignored. Some years back, a lecturer on maritime security at King’s Point refresher courses asked how many people in the room had suffered piratical attacks, or were close to some one who had. The great majority of officers’ hands went up. Finally, there is the very real influence of Asian piracy on American cargo interests and indirectly on the United States economy. All these suggest economic reasons we should be concerned with piracies which occur “over the horizon.”



On another level, Pacific piracy is a destabilizing force. It disrupts Asian economies, breaks down government control, and can help fuel insurrections. Maritime crimes also act as sand in the gears of international relations, creating jurisdictional headaches and international finger pointing, exacerbating existing disputes. To the extent that the United States supports unfettered commerce, equitable relations, and a peaceful Asia, it follows that we should assist in the repression of piracy in Pacific waters. We have a prior record in this regard in the case of the Gulf of Siam's "Boat People," although that aid had a humanitarian basis. Finally, under both the Convention on the High Seas of 1958 and the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, the United States has the duty to cooperate to the fullest extent in the repression of high seas piracy. It is clear that the old story of piracy continues in the Pacific, and it is in American interests to help end this tale at last.

N O T E S

- 1 Anonymous, "Shipmasters threaten to shoot themselves in the foot," *Commercial Crime International*, no. 1, 17.
- 2 This article is based in part on a speech delivered to the Asia Society in New York.
- 3 The Pacific region is here taken to include Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Indonesia, the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, China, the South and East China Seas, and the "HLA" quadrant area. Number of attacks, by year: 1991: 102; 1992: 70; 1993: 84; 1994: 113; 1995: 113; 1996: 123; 1997: 91; 1998: 97; 1999: 160; 2000 [first six mos.]: 85. *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Annual Report 1st January-31st December 1999* (London: ICC International Maritime Bureau, 2000), 3.⁵⁴ *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Annual Report 1st January-31st December 1998* (London: ICC International Maritime Bureau, 1999), 19.⁵⁴ *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Annual Report 1st January-31st December 1996* (London: ICC International Maritime Bureau, n.d.), 12; *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1997*, 21. In addition, two other tankers, the *Pendopo* and the 118-ton *Pladju*, were included in this total. *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1998*, 12, 28. Note too that these ships are all relatively small, but today's pirates are turning their attentions to ever larger prey.⁵⁴ *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1998*, 20; *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1999*, 20-21.⁵⁴ *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1998*, 10, 27, 29; *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1999*, 17-18. 13 of the pirates in the former case were sentenced to death in a Chinese trial.⁵⁴ Anonymous, "Japanese Seek New Route to Escape Piracy," *Business Times* (Singapore), 7 January 1999.⁵⁴ *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1998*, 14, 18.⁵⁴ Samuel Pyeatt Menefee, *Contemporary Piracy and International Law* (1995), 58.⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.
- 4 Samuel Pyeatt Menefee, *Trends in Maritime Violence* (Coulsdon, Surrey: Jane's Information Group, 1996), 69.⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.⁵⁴ Menefee, *Contemporary Piracy*, 61.⁵⁴ Michael Richardson, "Shipowners Say It's a Matter of Time Before Pirates Cause Disaster in Asia," *International Herald Tribune*, 1 June 1999. Menefee, *Contemporary Piracy*, 61, 62. *Piracy and Armed Robbery...1998*, 8.

To meet men who have boarded galleons, armed with cutlasses, one need not turn only to books. In Southern California, one's neighbor may have done just that while working as an actor or "extra" in pirate movies. Many of these films were shot partly on Southern California beaches and waters, which are identified, when known, in the list below. The sea stories told by Hollywood are among Southern California's most important maritime legacies, shaping the ways people across the globe have pictured humanity's involvement with the sea.

— the editor

The Pirates of Hollywood

A list of films from Hollywood's "Golden Age" compiled by Gail Selinger

Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd (Warner Brothers, 1952)
Against All Flags (Universal International Pictures, 1952)
Anne of the Indies (20th Century Fox Film Corp., 1951)
The Black Pirate (Elton Corp., 1926) **Catalina Island**
Barbary Pirate (Columbia Pictures Corp., 1949)
The Black Swan (20th Century Fox, 1942)
Blackbeard the Pirate (RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., 1952)
Blackbeard's Ghost (Walt Disney Productions, 1968)
Breed of the Sea (Robertson-Cole Pictures Corp., 1926)
The Buccaneer (Paramount Pictures Corp., 1938) **Catalina Island**
The Buccaneer (Paramount, 1958) **Catalina Island**
Buccaneer's Girl (Universal, 1950)
Captain Blood (Vitagraph Co. of America, 1924)
Captain Blood (Warner Brothers, 1935) **Diver's Cove (Laguna Beach) and Catalina Island**
Captain Kidd (Captain Kidd Productions, Inc. / United Artists, 1945)
Captain Kidd and the Slave Girl (Reliance / United Artists, 1954)
Captain Pirate (Columbia, 1952)
Caribbean (Paramount, 1952)
The Crimson Pirate (Warner Brothers, 1952) **Catalina Island**
Dancing Pirate (Pioneer Pictures Corp., 1936)
Daphne and the Pirate (Fine Arts Film Co., 1916)
Double Crossbones (Universal, 1950)
Fair Winds to Java (Republic Pictures Corp., 1953)
The First Kiss (Famous Players-Lasky Corp. / Paramount, 1928)
Flame of Araby (Universal, 1951)
The Fortunes of Captain Blood (Columbia, 1950)
Frenchman's Creek (Paramount, 1944)
The Golden Hawk (Columbia, 1952)
Hero's Island (Daystar Productions / UA, 1962)
The King's Pirate (Universal, 1967)
Last of the Buccaneers (Columbia, 1951)
Master of Ballantrae (Warner Brothers, 1953)
Moonfleet (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1955)
New Moon (MGM, 1940) **Catalina Island**

Old Ironsides (Famous Players-Lasky / Paramount, 1926) **Catalina Island**
Peg of the Pirates (Fox Film Corp., 1918)
The Pirate (MGM, 1948)
The Pirate's Gold (Biograph, 1908)
Pirates of Tortuga (20th Century Fox, 1961)
Pirates of Tripoli (Columbia, 1955)
Prince of Pirates (Columbia, 1953)
Princess and the Pirate (RKO, 1944)
Raiders of the Seven Seas (Global Productions / UA, 1953)
Return to Treasure Island (Eclipse Films, 1954)
The Road to Romance (MGM, 1927)
Sea Devils (RKO, 1953) **Channel Islands and surrounding waters**
The Sea Hawk (Frank Lloyd Productions, 1924)
The Sea Hawk (Warner Brothers, 1940)
The Spanish Main (RKO, 1945)
To Have and To Hold (Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company, 1916)
Treasure Island (Fox, 1918) **An early use of Catalina Island**
Treasure Island (Maurice Tourneur Productions, 1920)
Treasure Island (MGM, 1934) **Catalina Island and Laguna Beach**
Treasure Island (Walt Disney Productions, 1950)*
Yankee Buccaneer (Universal, 1952)
Yankee Pasha (Universal, 1954)

* Disney's first non-animated feature film was shot in Britain, but some studio artwork was created in Burbank.

Pirates at Laguna Beach:

In Southern California, the fantasy of pirate life was captured on film. Michael Curtiz, seated with legs crossed, directs Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone in the climactic duel for the 1935 *Captain Blood* at Diver's Cove, Laguna Beach. Swordplay was part of every pirate film, though historical accuracy wasn't.



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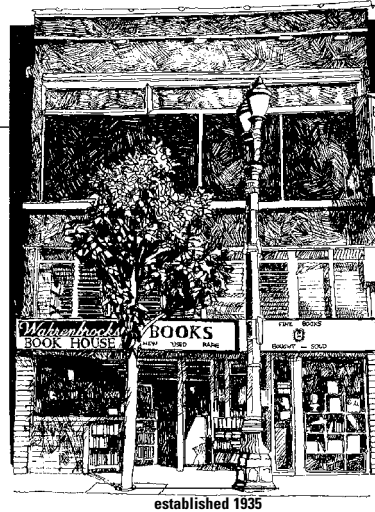
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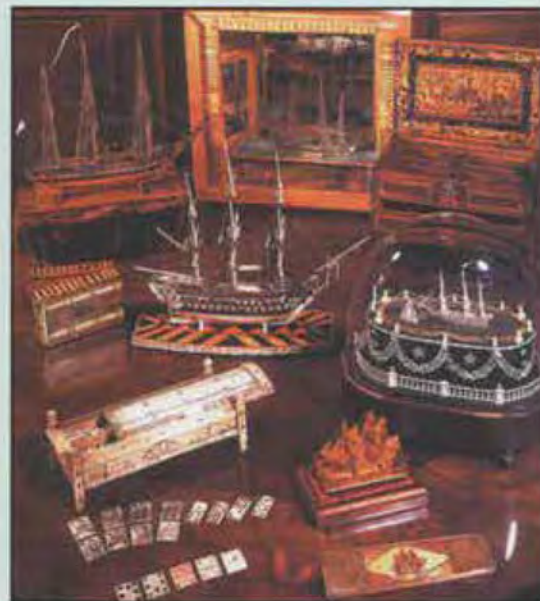
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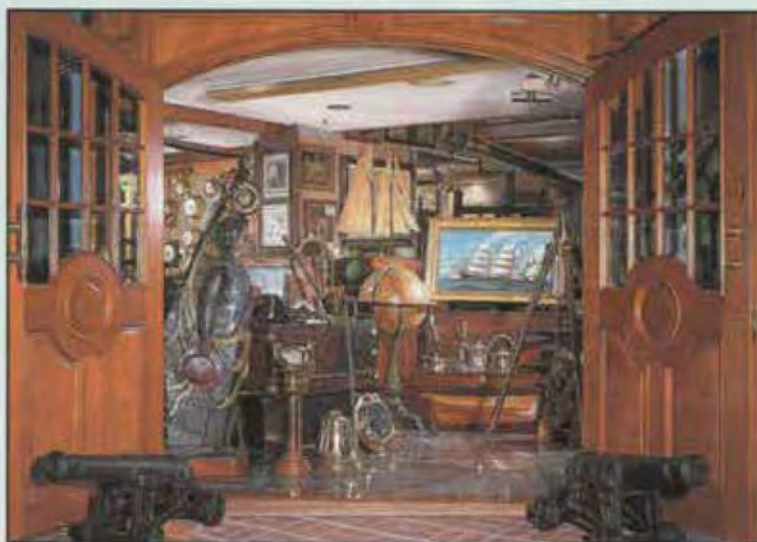
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