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## Harbor of the Sun

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MAX MILLER

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HARBOR OF THE SUN—SAN DIEGO

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# Harbor of the Sun

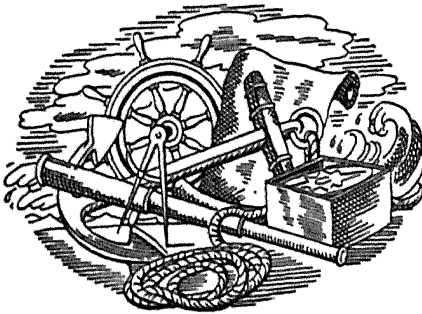
THE STORY OF THE PORT OF SAN DIEGO

By  
MAX MILLER

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ILLUSTRATED

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FIRST EDITION

To

ROY and AIRDRIE PINKERTON

partly because years and years ago when I first came to San Diego and went into his newspaper office and asked: "*How about it?*" he answered: "*All right. You can go down and see what's been going on along the waterfront.*" Both the new job and the assignment turned out to be bigger than I had thought, the waterfront having "*been going on,*" it seems, some four hundred years. And these years are this book.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author and publisher are indebted to Mr Reginald Poland, Director of the Fine Arts Gallery at San Diego, California, and Julia Gethmann Andrews of San Diego for their invaluable assistance in illustrating this book.





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## Before Starting

**T**HE HARBOR IS SHAPED like a long double gourd, the slender harbor entrance being the curved stem.

The high end of Point Loma is the spot for seeing it all. From up there the port with its arena-like gallery of back-country hills becomes one of those relief maps we used to make in sixth grade out of dough, salt and a talent for becoming more elaborate than technical. A teacher who had not seen this harbor from Point Loma, but only a pupil's relief map of the bulging, twisting bay, would be inclined to say: "Now, William, you know that isn't so."

The Silver Strand would be the reason.

This strand of sea-level sand which really makes the harbor is too thin and too long to be believed by anybody, even while looking at it from above. To make it on his relief map the boy could have yanked out a hair from the braids of the girl in front. His own hair would have been too short. And the girl would have had to be a blonde, a sandy blonde.

The portals to the harbor entrance are Mexican islands, the Coronados. There are two of them, sometimes three

## Before Starting

of them, sometimes the pin point of a fourth. A lot depends on the kind of day it is, and the hour. They are mountains which have sunk up to their necks. At one time they were attached to the mainland of Point Loma. They are in a way barometers for the toy city. On days when they are altogether too clear, and when one almost can reach out and touch the sun-baked mesquite upon them, the next day or so will bring rain most likely. The waters off the Coronados, going straight down with a jump-off, are the harbor's swordfishing grounds, both commercial and sporting.

The harbor today is not noted for its shipping. Such decades come, such decades go, but right now—today—the story of the harbor is not that of shipping. The reasons for the moment are several and are boring, concerning as they do railroad politics of the past, politics of the present, and also the fact that San Diego of today does not have a great deal to ship by water. The California oil fields are too far to the north, being in other counties. And fruit these days, as we know, goes by rail de luxe.

Nor is San Diego an industrial city. The story of its harbor, rather, is the story almost of a four-hundred-year-old man who has kept a coast-line hotel from the tail end of the Renaissance to our time. Because his harbor is the oldest on what is now the west coast of the United States he has seen, we would imagine, quite a few things, quite a turnover among his ever-changing guests.

Sometimes he has been a very sleepy innkeeper and has

## Before Starting

nodded his head upon the lobby desk for long siestas indeed—to be awakened sharply by musket balls. A new gang out of somewhere had burst into the lobby, demanding rooms.

Yet, try as hard as one will to avoid it, there does seem no other alternative but to start the harbor's account with Cabrillo. He certainly is not the first person who comes to mind when one sees the harbor for the first time. But his name just naturally has to come first somehow, the springboard. For those who may be weary of hearing of him—this mysterious Portuguese, this evanescent Portuguese—the first chapter will seem the wrong chapter for an opening. Perhaps the third chapter, or the second, or the fifth or fourth more properly might have been first.

Or for that matter a picture of today's harbor at the outset might have been more appropriate, a picture including the destroyers, the tenders, the submarines, or the planes, or the kelp harvester outside, or the tuna clippers, or even such a minute object as the harbor's little laundry boat. There she goes, the weather-grayed little boat, making the rounds of the vessels to collect sailors' laundry. The only visible paint on her is her name: *The Spirit of the Dirty Shirt*.

A haze hangs over the ocean's rim today. That is a good sign. Tomorrow will be sunny, too.

M. M.

*La Jolla,  
California.*



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## Harbor of the Sun





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# 1

**T**HEY COME IN, they go out, and some come back again. And they have been doing this for four hundred years now. For such is a harbor, the inhaling and exhaling. And such is the harbor of San Diego—the oldest on the west coast of the United States.

The European who first reached the harbor was buried on San Miguel Island, and once each year or so some sort of expedition cruises over there. The publicized report may be that the expedition is searching for his grave near Cuyler's Bay; but Indian relics are really what the more scientific of the expeditions are searching for, and finding.

He received a broken arm soon after discovering what is now the harbor of San Diego, and he died from the injury. This was his reward.

Yet no statue of him stands in San Diego. Or if a statue

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someday may stand, it will have to be faked. For his likeness is not known, nor the year of his birth. An artist once drew a sketch of him, but it is so obviously a composite of all explorers of that day that it has no personality whatsoever, but merely shows a dark head above a dark uniform.

Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was not Spanish. He was Portuguese. But he sailed under the Spanish flag. He sailed up from Mexico soon after Hernando Cortes had subjugated that country and had been called back to Spain to prevent him from becoming too powerful, to prevent him from becoming an emperor all his own. At least, so it is said.

At that time the California of today was a rumored island, and as such was believed populated with all the myths of the day, including Amazons, and including too the possible key to the fabled Strait of Anian—gateway to the riches of the Indies.

Cortes himself would have liked to head the expedition to find the Isle of California. But, being called back to Spain, he was out of favor now. But one of his officers, Pedro de Alvarado, prepared to carry on regardless. He is the one who started the preparations for the expedition northward from Natividad, Mexico. But before he could start he was killed by Mixtons during a foolish war of his own origination. Cabrillo took over the expedition, and Cabrillo sailed.

Cabrillo was a substitute, and Cabrillo was an accident.

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Had he lived he might have become a big name in history, in schools, in geography. He must have been a sturdy man. For when he was dying over on San Miguel Island he told his expedition to continue cruising the new shores of California without him, and to leave him.

The expedition obeyed, but not for long. Some figure today that Cabrillo's two vessels moved as far north as what is now Santa Barbara. Others figure that the vessels may have moved as far north as Monterey. Yet this part of it makes little difference today. But he had done this: he and his expedition had cruised farther northward than any European yet had cruised. And the two tipsy vessels, the *Victoria* and the *San Salvador*, must have been something to see.

The two vessels had been knocked together on the west shore of Mexico. They had been built out of driftwood and scraps and scarcely any metal. They floated much like driftwood, too, going sideways as well as forward. They had little balance, they were top-heavy with lofty poop decks and were almost as broad as they were long. The prevailing winds of the west coast were against them, the same then—four hundred years ago—as the winds would be today.

The rickety *Victoria* and the equally rickety *San Salvador* were more than three months moving from Natividad to their first haven in the new land, the present port of San Diego. The departure from Natividad was June 17, 1542. The arrival in San Diego was September 28. To run

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out of a storm when the wind had suddenly shifted to the storm direction of southwest, the two vessels pushed into the lee of the only promontory available. This is Point Loma, and the promontory proved to be the headland of a strangely landlocked harbor, freakishly landlocked.

The dying died and were buried.

The survivors searched for water and found it by digging into the dry river bed which leads into the bay, and which in fact caused the bay to be formed as it has been through the centuries. But September is no sure month to find water in the river except by digging.

The Indians had for their main weapons throwing sticks (much like boomerangs) but did not throw them. The Indians were too mystified to do anything except to stare and to tag along from a distance they presumed was safe. The Indian men were naked, wearing not so much as a G-string. The Indian women wore skirts of rabbit hide. But all were curious, and all were bewildered. Their huts were of lean-to brush. A few of the men had bows and arrows, but the main weapons remained those throwing sticks and rocks.

The first shore party sent by Cabrillo to find water became lost at night, confusing False Bay with the regular bay. The party was obliged to stay ashore all night on the shore of False Bay, and presumed that the two vessels had departed. For their lanterns were not in sight on False Bay.

This was when the Indians, as an experiment, tried to

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see if the weird visitors could be killed or even hurt, or if they were immortals. The Indians, from a safe distance, shot a few arrows at the group. The arrows scratched against the leather armor, but nobody fell down or cried out in pain. And with daylight the group was as alive as ever. The vessels in the harbor proper could be seen then, over the low ridge of swampland, and the group returned aboard.

Six days Cabrillo remained in the harbor. He gave it the name of San Miguel. By sign language he learned from the more bold of the Indians that they had for a fact heard a few rumors about white men beyond the mountains of the interior. The sign language told him that the white men were on horseback and that the party, all bearded, had passed on. But how far away they were, whether a thousand miles or a hundred miles or two thousand miles, could not be determined by the sign language.

Cabrillo, in a ceremony ashore, took possession of all California in the name of His Majesty, Charles of Castille. And in payment for California he gave a shirt each to two Indian boys, who immediately scampered back to hiding with them, to try to figure out what they were to be used for.

Then Cabrillo sailed north, still bent on finding the short-cut passage to the Indies. In time he landed at a California island north up the coast, the island now called San Miguel. While on this island he fell, and his arm was broken close to the shoulder. He was in a bad way, but

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tried to continue northward, broken arm and all. But the injury was too much for him, complications set in, and in January of 1543—three months after leaving San Diego—he returned to the island of San Miguel and died and was buried there.

His dying orders were that the expedition continue searching the coast and forget about him. These orders were followed as long as possible, which was not very long. The two vessels became separated, Bartolomé Ferrelo being now in command of the flagship. But a storm separated the vessels. Provisions were exhausted, and much of the return journey south was spent in each vessel searching for the other.

Another brief stop was made by the flagship in the harbor of "San Miguel"—or San Diego. But the stop was only long enough to obtain more water and to receive once again the two native boys who had been given shirts by Cabrillo. The two proud boys, made bold by their bewildering gifts, were taken aboard. They were kidnaped. If they lived the homeward voyage they would serve as evidence back in Mexico. If not, the Spaniards would still have the shirts, and the technical cost of California would be nothing.

But the Indians around the harbor had a long memory, especially the parents of the boys. And this time the Indians needed a long memory, for exactly sixty years intervened before another vessel entered the port.

No record exists of the Indian boys surviving. In fact,

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the odds all point against it. For the winter storms of Lower California were such that even few of the regular sailors survived. In fact, they record in their log: “. . . we thought we would be lost, but we promised Our Lady to make a pilgrimage to her church if she would save us. . . .”

As for Cabrillo, the record of his entrance into this bit of history, and of his exit from it, is so brief that the man could almost be considered a wraith. And, from San Diego's outlook, he could have been placed on earth merely for the one purpose—the purpose of discovering what is now her port.

Yet for all of that his courage, even when measured alongside the courage of all the other navigators and explorers going every which way in those days for the king of Spain—yes, Cabrillo's courage must have possessed plenty of what it takes.

A bridge is named after him in San Diego, and a theater, and a hotel and a few other things, but that is about all. Even the name he gave to the harbor, the name of “San Miguel,” did not stay. The name was changed by the next to come, sixty years later.

Even the attempt of Cabrillo's own sailors to honor him, after his death, did not find permanence. They named the island on which he died and was buried “Juan Rodríguez.” But this name did not last, either. It was changed by the very next to come, who had changed the name of the harbor of “San Miguel” to “San Diego.” This same

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one, in turn, changed the name of the island of "Juan Rodríguez" to "San Miguel."

And that is the way of it.

And that is one more reason why Cabrillo, who gave his life to the discovery of California, is not well known beyond its coast.



---

## 2

**T**HE NEXT EUROPEAN (from Mexico) to visit the harbor was a wealthy retired merchant who decided rather late in life to be an explorer and to forget being a merchant. He was Sebastián Vizcaíno, a fool for punishment.

To those who year after year live upon some ocean cliff here, and with nothing between their windows and the sea-breaking reefs, peculiar hours come when the ocean of this southern California shore is absolutely vacant of sail and spar and hull.

No man-made object of movement or color whatsoever is out there to break the circular and timeless stretch of the sea, and these are the hours when one can so easily presume the ocean to be the ocean of Elizabeth's time.

For she, too, with her Sir Francis Drake had considerable to do with the reawakening of Spanish interest in Alta

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California. Was it, or was it not, an island? And if an island, where was the Strait of Anian?

Incidents dovetail into events, and events eventually dovetail into the present, and that is the way of it. And such is the only pleasure some of us can find in the recorded bygone. Exact dates we may abhor, but eras are interesting at times, especially when pirates and pseudo-pirates and legalized pirates have something quite directly to do with the reason we are living here, or other Americans are living here, and not Russians or Chinese or Japanese or Spaniards or Mexicans or Englishmen or Frenchmen—or the list could go on and on.

So, when the destroyer squadrons and the light-cruiser squadrons leave San Diego Harbor today for their annual maneuvers elsewhere on the Pacific, and when other vessels for the moment seem suddenly to have disappeared from these waters also—yes, these are the hours of certain days when the sea from the cliff windows is as vacant of craft as three centuries and more ago.

The first Manila galleon annually hugged these shores on her approach to New Spain within astonishingly few years after Cabrillo's adventure. But the first of these annual Manila galleons seldom anchored till safely south down the coast in Mexican waters.

For the England of Elizabeth's time was a jealous England, as we know. And even when not officially at war with Spain, England had her Thomas Cavendish, her John Hawkins, her John Oxenham, besides her Drake, who

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soon stole over into this Pacific. As time moved on, some such as Drake worked the more northern coasts. Some worked off New Spain itself, and some worked the waters of Central America proper. Some escaped with Spanish plunder, and continued to escape with it, and others were captured. But the results were the same: Spain was frightened. Especially was she frightened for the welfare of the richest enterprise of all, the annual arrival at Mexico (New Spain) of the Manila galleon.

For nothing pleased the English privateers quite so much as to stay in hiding along this California coast to pounce upon the galleons at a time when their Spanish crews and passengers were sick and weak or dead or else dying from the months of ordeal in crossing the Pacific. These galleons with their half-million-dollar cargoes would have been a half-year or more in coasting with the Black Stream, now called the Japanese current, eastbound before making their first landfall off California.

Under such circumstances the clumsy vessels were push-overs for the Englishmen, and the results began to tell on the nerves of the Spanish merchants who had sunk their fortunes in each annual cruise. And as money talks louder than sailor lives, the officials of New Spain began to think once again of reinvestigating the harbors hazily reported by the Cabrillo cruise some sixty years before.

A Spanish settlement of some sort should be established on the California coast somewhere to receive the Manila galleon when she should first arrive, and to give word to

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the galleon if any Englishmen had been sighted recently, and if the waters seemed clear for the galleon to continue southward to Acapulco.

Items fit together, then, in a peculiar montage, provided one cares to go at his history that way. The past can be blended only too easily into the present. For the sea itself has no time limit. If it were not for Elizabeth being what she was, San Diego itself would not be what it is. And if it were not for Elizabeth's private grudge against King Philip II, this whole coast line today might not belong to the United States.

Thus it goes, and any of us could literally go out of our heads wondering just what would have occurred if something else had not.

The desire of New Spain to establish a definite port somewhere in Alta California—some port with a few soldiers and a flag posted—resulted in the next Spanish expedition to visit San Diego, the expedition headed by that retired merchant, Sebastián Vizcaíno.

While playing at being an explorer, he already had taken quite a beating against sea and hardships around the Gulf of California before he succeeded in talking himself into the bigger job of cruising Upper California in the name of the king.

Vizcaíno's importance to San Diego lies mainly in the fact that he gave the harbor its permanent name. For his flagship was the *San Diego*, and his day of arrival, November 12, 1602, was also the saint's name day. This double-

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header of coincidence outmaneuvered the possibility of poor Cabrillo's designation, "San Miguel," standing.

Vizcaíno remained ten days in San Diego to repair his three little vessels and to provide the surviving members of his crew a chance to catch a breather ashore and get well if they could. In their cruise up from Acapulco against the prevailing winds the men had been battered for a longer time than usually required for the Manila galleon to cross the Pacific. These contrary prevailing winds from the northwest are one of the reasons why California was compelled to remain so long a secret land of legends and rumors and, for that matter, a mystical island on the few charts of the period.

Before returning to Acapulco, more than half of Vizcaíno's men were dead as a result of the rough going. So if he is forgotten in San Diego, so are they. And the ocean hereabouts continues to sing its indifferent song just the same.

But again, as concerns the biography of the bay, one must draw another long breath. For between the departure of the sails of Vizcaíno and the entrance of another vessel the intervening years totaled one hundred and sixty-seven!

So, indeed, San Diego knows how to take its time. It learned early.

---

### 3

**Y**ES, THAT INTERVENING century and a half, as concerns New Spain's resolutions to establish a colony on San Diego Bay as the home base for the possible establishment of other colonies in Upper California—all this could be considered one of history's longest mañanas.

For the Manila galleon the while had continued her annual method of sighting the California coast, then skirting it southward without landing until reaching Acapulco. And her crews and passengers had continued dying of scurvy, thirst, starvation, murder, as in the past.

Also, the galleon was confronted by a new turnover of English buccaneers, explorers, pirates, privateers and whatever else they were, the new roll call including such stand-outs as Henry Morgan, Dampier, Swan, Cowley, Eaton, Harris, Wafer, Townley, Clipperton, Shelvocke. And

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there was Woodes Rogers, too, who snared a Manila galleon directly off the tip of Lower California.

And George Anson, also. Unable to make a haul on the California side of the waters, he crossed the Pacific to catch a galleon just as she was leaving the Philippines. In fact, England was on the up now, and Spain, once so invincible, was teetering for the down. But her final new pay-off of worries was Russia, the country which began creeping towards California by way of the Aleutians.

Yet all this while the present west coast of the United States remained more of a mythical conjecture than an actuality, and largely because of these same old prevailing winds being from the northwest. To cross from Asia eastward with the Black Stream was easier than to buck the northwester northward from Mexico. So, California still being considered an island by many, the world retained its percentage of imaginative liars who could prove that California was an island, and there were others who went so far as to claim to have found the long-sought Strait of Anian through the North American continent to the Indies.

What a crazy time it must have been!

And Spain was thrown out of gear by the report of two imaginary islands, "Rico de Oro" and "Rica de Plata," supposedly lying in the northern Pacific somewhere.

These supposed islands, when found, would serve instead of California as a midway base for the Manila galleons. Besides, the very names of these mythical islands give

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some idea why the richer Spaniards would have preferred to find them in lieu of colonizing the bay of San Diego. For neither Cabrillo nor Vizcaíno had returned from San Diego with a smidge of ore, nor had they reported seeing any gold or silver on the coast.

But the showdown for some sort of definite action in colonizing Alta California came when the English privateers, the Russians and even the French began closing in too closely for comfort (Spanish comfort) towards the shore of California. The mañana fever would have to end. And it ended in 1769.

The long sleep ended with the combination in New Spain of just the right men, including Portola, Father Serra, Rivera and—the real one behind it all—Galvez, the *visitador* of New Spain.

So anxious was Galvez to get a colony going at San Diego's harbor that he threw aside all personal dignity and worked like a regular laborer in the physical job of helping to outfit the vessels for the journey northward. And so, after more than a century and a half of lots of talk but little action, we are finally given the picture of five expeditions setting out from the tip of Lower California bound for San Diego Bay.

Their departures were not simultaneous exactly, but a few weeks apart, even a month or so apart, but the general idea was for all of them to be moving in upon San Diego's harbor about the same time, three going by sea and two by land.



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The vessels were the *San Antonio*, the *San Carlos* and the *San José*, and those aboard were the ones who really paid. Compared to what these crews went through while bucking the prevailing winds and a *chubasco*, the two land expeditions can be said to have had an easy time of it. The personnel of the five expeditions comprised about three hundred men at the start, and more than a third of these were to lose their lives even before San Diego was reached. But the toll was paid to the sea.

The *San José*, for instance, never did reach San Diego. In fact the little vessel completely disappeared after leaving the tip of Lower California. What happened to her and all her men, nobody knows.

The harbor still has a point called Dead Man's Point, relic of the wholesale burial grounds for those of the scurvy-ridden crews who managed to reach San Diego before dying. The others, of course, were dumped overboard on the way up.

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## 4

**T**ODAY, WHEN ONE is standing on the high tip of Point Loma, or walking up there, or sitting smoking up there, the past can still be the present, and the present can still be the past, and that is the strange part of it.

For the toy city far across the bay is the mirage actually, and the immediate ruggedness of the Point Loma terrain as of old is the reality.

History, like a newsreel, could be run backwards or forwards here, it would seem, yet the natural architecture of the harbor would remain much the same as in the beginning.

The amphitheater is identical with the one which received Cabrillo, and which received Vizcaíno, and which received the bleary-eyed, discouraged survivors of 1769—toiling for their teetering empire. The outlines are exactly

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the same outlines seen by those sick men. So, too, are the greens and browns of the spring hills in the background, the cliffs of the Point, and the slopes with their mesquite, their chaparral, their cacti. One has only to walk off the road a pace and he will be in the same sort of brittle shrubbery as that of the firstcomers.

For the natural growth is slow here, almost a desert growth, taking its time as did the natives. And no violent splurge of new trees or new brush is likely to arise on its own accord to blur the original outlines of the time-cured hills and sod. This is why history is so easy to follow here, perhaps. For one has only to look, and there it is—the same canyons, the same arroyos, the same rocky coves or sandy beaches as mentioned in the diaries and logs of the beginners.

Even the whales along the kelp bed beyond the Point behave as in the beginning, passing south the first few months of each year, then north during the next few months. But a bulky kelp harvester is out there now, grunting back and forth, and that could be the only marked difference.

Also, those strange monsters, the sea elephants that surprised and frightened those first Spaniards—the sea elephants are still in these neighboring waters. These giant mammals with their elephant-like snouts were presumed once to have been killed off, exterminated, by whalers. The sea elephants were almost exterminated. Such is true. But a few found a haven rookery for themselves on the island

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of Guadalupe, safely off the upper Mexican coast. And so, from their hiding over there, their numbers have increased and they are protected and are seen occasionally swimming as far north as San Diego once again. In times gone by their mating roars from the Coronado shore line could be heard in San Diego itself during days and nights of calm. Or at least so it is said.

But the sea otter, which really had almost as much to do with California's peculiar turnabout history during one era as gold was to have with the history later—these sea otters were once considered exterminated, too. Now, after decades of supposed extermination, the sea-otter colonies are being seen once again. But the Russians and the Indians and the fishermen are not after these sea otters today, and so their protected numbers are on the comeback.

The drooping colonists of 1769 saw hovering over the graves of Dead Man's Point birds with the widest wingspread of any bird in the world, the California condors, larger even than the Andes condors. These California condors also were supposed to have been all killed off by the subsequent ranchers. But now a few of the condors have been resighted, a few families of these birds have been re-discovered huddled in a safe wilderness of their own in the back country. Not only are they protected now, but their very whereabouts is generally kept secret from the public.

So time, as we consider time, has moved both backwards and forwards on this immediate coast line—the beginning of the Pacific Coast settlements of the present United

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States. San Diego was the start, and Point Loma of San Diego the start of the start, and there we are.

In regard to geographical discoverers, though, generally do we feel that if so and so had not discovered such and such a place, somebody else by now obviously would have made the discovery anyway. For at most no explorer originated this harbor or that harbor, or invented it, or made it. He merely came across something which already was created and ready and waiting.

Yet in years to come the same attitude perhaps will be taken in regard to another exploration undertaking in this immediate region. Or, rather, from this immediate region.

When on Point Loma, and when looking in exactly the opposite direction from where came the *San Salvador* and *Victoria*, and later the *San Antonio* and the *San Carlos*—when looking in exactly the opposite direction from Point Loma one can see the tip of Mount Palomar to the northeast. The earth's mightiest telescope, the one with the two-hundred-inch lens, will be making some explorations from up there, too. At least, such is its purpose. But the universe always has been waiting also. And its Milky Way.

For between the arrival of the *San Carlos* and the *San Antonio* from one direction and the construction of the Glass Giant of Palomar in the other direction—a two-hour ride away—considerable has taken place within this immediate harbor radius.

For what started here in San Diego, the first port, had for some reason a habit of sprawling, even to prairies as far

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north as Montana. For, yes, the earliest of these San Diego rancherias were among the first to handle cattle in a big way and to help introduce the lasso and the roundup to the West.

One might say too, of course, that the lasso also was used by some of the earliest Spanish soldiery (bachelors) for the capturing and grounding of Indian squaws.

But the story of the port really starts, not with Cabrillo, not with Vizcaíno, but with the arrival in the spring of 1769 of what appeared to be a ghost ship, the storm-mauled *San Antonio*—the first keel to enter the harbor after 167 years. Meanwhile, during all this time, no European spoiled the harbor silence.

Nor, from the Indians' point of view ashore, was that all of it. The *San Antonio* was the first of the expedition to arrive. The Indians ashore referred to the strange apparition as "the walking house," or again as "a whale with wings." But none of the strangely bearded men aboard disembarked from the anchored vessel. Rather, they continued pacing and repacing the deck, as if very frightened and very nervous and very anxious.

For as yet no word had been received from the overland parties trying to reach the harbor from the length of Lower California. Nor had word been received from the *San Carlos*, although she had departed for San Diego a month in advance of the *San Antonio*. Orders to the *San Antonio's* captain, Juan Perez, had been to risk no landing exploits until the soldiery should arrive with the overland

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delegations for protection ashore. Perez, in this strange land, had cause to be mystified. What had happened to the *San Carlos* and to everybody else, he had no way of knowing. He decided to remain twenty days, waiting and watching and wondering, and after that could not dare remain longer.

On the eighteenth day, and with still no sign, Perez began preparations to haul anchor and leave. He sent a crew ashore with a cross and a letter. The shore party quickly planted the cross close to the beach of Point Loma and deposited the letter under some stones, the cross serving as a marker for the mailbox.

The curious Indians watched the operation but refrained from any tampering. They presumed that the cross was taboo magic. What the bearded beings were doing was all beyond the natives, and long afterwards they explained that the *San Antonio's* arrival had been accompanied by an eclipse of the sun and a minor earthquake. This may or may not have been so, and astronomers, if any of them feel like it, could check up on the eclipse, the arrival of the *San Antonio* having been April 11 or close to that date.

So the Indians left the cross and the letter and the men alone, the natives already having had enough excitement for one spring. But they were to have more. They were to have so much more that never again would their lives be their own, or their souls, or their homes, or their lands, or their bodies, or their children, or their wives. For on the same day the letter was deposited, into port limped the *San*

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*Carlos*—but with an awful silence. With a ghastly silence, actually.

Aboard the *San Carlos* only one man was able to remain on his feet, or rather on his hands and knees. He crawled to the anchor and let it drop. Then he himself dropped face flat upon the deck. And that was the only salute from the *San Carlos* to the *San Antonio*.

The flagship *San Carlos*, in trying to reach San Diego Bay from the tip of Lower California, had been at sea 110 days.

She had overshot the mark a bit, partly owing to the old recordings of Cabrillo two centuries and a quarter previous. Because of his poor instruments he had marked San Diego two degrees farther north than it was, and Vizcaíno's instrument sixty years later had not been much more accurate. All of which could give some idea of how little the "Isle of California" was known, even though by now vessels of almost all the seagoing nations had meanwhile circumnavigated the world.

The *San Carlos*, lying there just inside the harbor entrance, could have been the proverbial painted ship upon the proverbial painted ocean. Her anchor was over, but her shredded sails were still aloft and motionless.

The crew of the *San Antonio* lost no time lowering a boat and boarding the *San Carlos* to see what was the matter. Scurvy and leaking water casks were the answer. Those not already dead from the 110 days at sea were in the midst of dying now, or else terribly sick.



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The crew of the *San Antonio* moved the helpless men ashore and rigged a camp for them out of the sails. But the men continued dying almost as fast as they could be moved. Apparently the scurvy and the bad water had led the way to a regular plague, for whatever it was it was contagious. The *San Antonio's* men began catching it now, whatever it was, and they too began dying. The shore camp became a camp of death, and within two weeks less than a fourth of the original party was alive.

This camp of death, under the shreds of sail canvas, was the beginning of the settlement of San Diego. Few today mention the fact. And Dead Man's Point is recognized only by harbor navigators.

But it was from this camp that the few survivors of the crews managed to nod weakly at the first of the two overland groups to reach the bay from Mexico.

Under other conditions this uniting of the land and sea expeditions could have been one for happy ceremony and a toast or two. But the overland group—and it is a long walk up from the tip of Lower California—had been sustained during final weeks largely by the imagined reception and new food to be received from the vessels awaiting in the bay.

But it was something else again for the foot-blistered men to be walking bluntly into a plague. And instead of being allowed to sit down for a breather and a cup, they were greeted with crude shovels and told to get digging—graves.

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The one touch of luck for the handful of men was that the amused Indians presumed that the deaths were being caused by the strange food of the visitors.

For the Indians had set right to with a cheery ambition to steal everything, except the food. The Indians literally yanked the blankets from under the dying men in the death camp. But the Indians not only refrained from stealing the food, they would not accept it or touch it, even when offered to them as a bribe to keep away and be good.

The tiny food supply was so short that, had the Indians combined their talents towards stealing it, as with everything else around camp, the results would have been like a visit from a locust swarm.

The Indians in turn, though, had no objection about offering their own food to the peculiar Black Beards. But the method of these San Diego Indians of obtaining a meal consisted for the most part in idly squatting on the ground and accepting anything which crawled towards them or upon them or leaped around them within arm's length. Lizards were good, so were frogs, grasshoppers, snakes, rats, ground owls and injured sea gulls. Raw fish were all right, but they required the effort of catching. Acorns grew too far away, being in the back country. The Indians liked acorns, but too much excitement was going on around the harbor these days for the Indians to be bothered going back that far for a meal. They could not eat their acorns and have their visitors, too.

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These Black Beards who kept using the word "Christians" were proving themselves to be really splendid people. But how they did like to poison themselves! Maybe it was all part of their religion to eat poison and die fast. And their other familiar word, "Jesus," meant apparently an inexhaustible supply of bright cloth, little glass stones, salt, knives and broken pieces of iron.

The first friars, on arriving overland one by one, were becoming day by day, hour by hour more miserable about the whole setup. For Father Serra, limping along in the rear, had not as yet reached camp. He had been delayed by an infected leg, the same leg which had been injured while he was walking from Vera Cruz to Mexico City immediately on his first arrival at New Spain from Old Spain. This game leg, as we know, always did remain his cross the rest of his life. He considered the injury as a punishment from God for some sin. And yet, being a Franciscan, he stuck to the Franciscan vow of refusing to ride even when horses or mules were available.

While hobbling over the rough canyons and cacti towards San Diego Bay from the tip of Lower California, he would not give up even when the others begged him to do so. He would tell the others to go on ahead, leave him, and then late at night he would come hobbling alone into camp—whenever he could reach it. But one night his swollen leg completely gave out. He could neither move it nor stand on it, and this was the night his prayers were transferred from heaven to a muleteer:

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“Son, canst thou not make me a remedy for the ulcer on my foot and leg?”

“Padre, what remedy can I know? Am I a surgeon? I am an *arriero* and have healed only the sores of the beasts.”

“Then, son, suppose me a beast and this ulcer a saddle gall from which have resulted the swelling of the leg and the pains that I feel and that give me no rest: and make for me the same medicament that thou wouldst apply to a beast.”

Though the conversation, as recorded, may be a bit too theatrical for actuality, the idea must have been there. For the muleteer, we are told, answered by applying a sort of axle grease made of tallow. This allowed drainage for the sore and at the same time helped to keep out further infection from cacti and dust. Anyway, Father Serra, after the treatment, was able next day to continue towards San Diego Bay. And he was able to continue the day after that, and the day after that.

In addition to his painfully inflamed leg he had another perplexity. The nearer he approached the harbor, the more naked were becoming the male Indians he encountered. Indeed, as in Cabrillo's time, most of them were not wearing anything. Serra had yet to see his first San Diego woman, and when told that his first contact with a bay-shore village would be made on the morrow, the suffering padre prayed to God for advice. What should he do? The padre answered the question for himself next morning by holding a hand over his eyes until his companion said:

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“You may open them, Father. She is not without garment.”

For it was true. The woman, as in Cabrillo's time also, wore a skirt. But this one was not of rabbitskin. It was of deerhide, and it was short and it was jagged. Nor did she seem to care much whether it stayed on or fell off.

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## 5

**T**HE FIRST SPANIARD to be killed by Indians at San Diego, and therefore the first to be killed by Indians in California, was a boy. He was José Vegerano, and the haphazard attack which resulted in his death occurred when the surviving colonists were at their lowest ebb and when the settlement itself was only a few weeks old.

No monument today indicates the exact spot where he tumbled, an arrow in his back. And no monument perhaps is necessary. For the years have made such little difference to the general outlines of the harbor and to the declivities and the hills that even if Portola, for instance, or Serra should return to earth just long enough to revisit the sites of their first tiny camp close to the waterfront, he would have no trouble pointing and saying: "Why, yes, our huts were right here. And here. And over there. And the

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Indians attacked us from that direction—coming over that very ridge.”

This sameness may not be flattery for a city striving to surpass a two-hundred-and-twenty-thousand population, and on the verge of doing so with a surplus. Yet the most robust changes in the harbor have occurred, so far as we can see, during the present generation here.

The deepening of the harbor for the convenience of the warships has for a long time been going on, of course. And the dredged mud has been poured into certain areas along the tide flats for military bases and commercial landing fields. So, instead of the harbor being made wider, it has, for a fact, been made smaller, though deeper.

Nothing from the shore has been dug away, but the shore has been increased. What was here in the beginning is still here, and that is how it stands. And that is why one can so easily follow, physically follow, the descriptions from the notes and diaries of the firstcomers.

Monuments might help, provided one cares for monuments. But here they are not numerous, nor are they essential, although the most natural monument of all is the one left by the first friars immediately on arriving. They planted three date-palm seedlings close to their first camp. This was in 1769—the year the boy was killed—and one of these palms, the first ever planted in California, is still there and still growing. After exactly a hundred years it bore fruit, its first.

A fence is now around the palm, and thousands of pic-

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tures have been taken of it, but despite all this one hardly can become cynical over such a landmark, a sort of growing Plymouth Rock. As time went along, the value of the three palms gradually changed from that of convenient hitching posts to that of receiving carved initials. One of them was dug up and sent to one of the earlier Chicago World's Fairs, and a second palm was blown over rather recently by a storm.

But the third palm continues standing as always within a hop, skip, and musketshot of what recklessly is called the San Diego River, a majestic term which brings peculiar remarks from the Easterners and Northerners, they being under the impression that a river is supposed to have water in it.

This palm marks—though not too accurately—the spot where the boy Vegerano was killed. And the mouth of this river bed marks—though again not with absolute accuracy—the site of that first camp of the firstcomers. For this silly little river bed, dry most of the year, is one of the reasons San Diego is the oldest community in California. One could even say that the river bed is one of the reasons there is a San Diego, though such an assertion obviously might be carrying things too far.

Yet no guesswork need be associated with the fact that this river bed, whether figuratively dry or not, made life possible for the first camp, the first settlement, the first mission, the first presidio, the first livestock, the first grain (barley)—not only in San Diego but in California.



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Those rickety vessels, like the *San Antonio* and the *San Carlos*, certainly were too small, and certainly too slow, for the transporting of livestock to the settlement. The animals had to be driven overland up from Lower California, and when the herders reached anything which in the slightest resembled water, here the herders stayed and thanked God for the privilege.

Also, the Indians were the first to point out to the Black Beards how the river during the dry months is an upside-down river, meaning that the sand is on top and the water underneath. The water could be found at will by digging.

Though the term "upside-down river" has remained to this day, during the rainy weeks of winter the upside-down river here is anything but upside down. Indeed the river, the same as the whole San Diego River valley, has become at times a home-wrecking and stock-drowning torrent.

Anyway, with the arrival of the overland parties, including Father Serra, little time was lost in moving camp from the pest-camp region of Dead Man's Point to a more permanent establishment close to the river bed itself. Portola was the real officer in charge, and apparently a capable one.

But Serra, furiously anxious to get down to his real business of wholesale conversions, lost no time rigging up a protection close to the river to serve as a mission. Over this crude mission he raised the cross on Sunday, July 16

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(the year still being 1769), and the ceremony included the sermon wherein he vowed "to put to flight all the hosts of Hell and subject to the mild yoke of our holy faith the barbarity of the gentile Diegueños."

The Indians were entertained by the sermon, but they were not convinced. Nor could they understand a word of what was being said. They did, though, during the ceremony steal much of the sacred paraphernalia.

Not a single conversion was made the entire year, thereby establishing the all-time record for lows in Franciscan history. The nearest the friars came to making a conversion during the first year was when some of the Indians, as an experiment, offered a child for baptism. But at the last minute, as the baptismal bowl was being hoisted over the child's head, the youngster was yanked away by the mother.

The Indians—and there seemed to be thousands and thousands of them hanging around the camp—had not had such a good time since the last dead whale was washed ashore. They gladly accepted whatever was offered them except salvation.

But when the day came, and it was bound to come soon, when the friars' gifts were either exhausted or stolen, the Indians straightway had their own idea. Why wait to be given anything? Why not take everything all at once—including everything on the *San Carlos*?

The *San Carlos* was now the one remaining vessel in the harbor, the *San Antonio*, with a skeleton crew of sick men,



*Herbert R. Fitch Collection*

FRAY JUNÍPERO SERRA



*Photograph by L. J. Geddes*

MISSION SAN DIEGO DE ALCALA

Founded by Fray Junípero Serra on Presidio Hill in 1769; moved to present site in 1776; rebuilt in 1784, restored in 1931.



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having been sent back to Mexico for more men and more supplies.

The third vessel, the *San José*, never did arrive.

Also Portola, acting under the previous iron orders of New Spain, had left San Diego as per original schedule to continue overland in search of the reported port of Monterey. A second base should be established there, if such a rumored port actually existed and if it could be found.

Portola was never one to question orders, even though his departure northward from San Diego did leave the little settlement wide open for a possible beating. To face this grueling march northward he had been obliged to select for his party the best men from the survivors at San Diego. This meant that he had to choose just about anybody left who could stand up and walk.

Within a month he and his party were far away and gone in one direction. The *San Antonio* was gone in the other direction, and San Diego was left with only a carpenter, a blacksmith, three friars, three boy servants, some enlisted Indians from Lower California, Captain Villa of the *San Carlos*, a surgeon and some miserably sick sailors and soldiers. The whole group totaled no more than twenty.

The thousands of Indians, dumb as they were, decided that the moment was made to order to float on their tule rafts out to the *San Carlos*, board her and help themselves.

Two sick sailors were aboard, and they were all. And by such apparent indifference one can see how slightly the fighting ability of these Indian hordes already was being

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regarded by the Spaniards. The missionaries throughout their occupancy of California always referred to the unconverted Indians as "gentiles," but the general term for all Indians around this section was "*bestias*," which should give a better idea of how the poor stupid brutes were regarded.

But in their own way they did know how to live long, how to live easily, and how to live without working—a triple inheritance which was stolen from them almost instantly and never to be recovered.

Their language, almost impossible to learn or to record in writing, consisted mostly of a few slobbers and a squeal. Now that the thousands and thousands of these poor devils are all gone from the earth, the museum historians today are trying to find some good to say about them over their destroyed graves, but the best is: "They could make good baskets."

To give these Indians of the harbor a tribal name, or to classify their branch, is difficult. Sometimes the classification is "Diggers"—though this is far and away too broad a term. "Cahuillas" is another name given them, but this broad term also extends far back to some of the desert Indians. Still the term, for all of that, may be rather exact. The word "Diegueños," the missionary term applied to them because of the name of the bay, is purely local and too late.

These aborigines were not much on tribal loyalty, anyway. That is, in a big way. They had nothing of the do-or-

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die-for-the-tribe as had the Eastern Indians or the Indians of the prairies. To these Indians of the San Diego coast the immediate family was the main thing, and after that the village, and after that it was every man for himself. The families needed no permanent homes against winter and for this reason were always moving around wherever they pleased.

And they knew how to stay sufficiently healthy to multiply. For their little villages were everywhere—temporary, most of them—and the old sites can still be seen. Along the shore line today the old sites can be easily spotted by layers and layers of mussel shells, abalone shells, all kinds of shells. Rainwashes have put another covering of dirt over the shells, but the layers protrude through the soft cliffs, giving one the impression that the land has recently risen from the sea.

As for the longevity of these Indians when left alone, a few prize examples continue to linger undisturbed in San Diego's back country today—despite the zeal of the early Spaniards to have it otherwise. A few Indians ran off and held out, and their descendants tried to do the same.

For instance, Pedro Chino, a back-country Indian who died in 1939, was considered one of the oldest men in the United States. His years were estimated at 126—a figure derived by the fact that he remembered the “fall of the stars,” the meteoric phenomenon of 1833. At the time he was eighteen or twenty years old. The computation of the years and the ages was aided by another Indian, a woman,

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who remembered Pedro Chino as a grown man when she was a girl. She died the year before Chino died, and her age was estimated at 121 years.

Anyway, whether the figures are exactly correct or not, these two Indians of the Cahuillas certainly had lived beyond being youths. And Pedro Chino easily could have known the last of the Indian generation which had set out in tule rafts to raid the *San Carlos* in the harbor of San Diego.

The two sick sailors aboard heard the Indians coming alongside. The sailors feebly reached for a musket on deck and fired it into the air. That was all. The gunfire startled the Indians but did not frighten them, since nobody was hurt. But they pulled back to shore to talk things over, this being their first experience with gunfire.

The threat of the *San Carlos* warned the Spaniards to be more cautious. But the caution took the wrong twist, for more guards were immediately placed aboard the vessel, thereby causing another drain on the feeble man power of the shore settlement. The Indians were the last to mind, for now they decided to gang up on the rudely constructed mission and to help themselves to everything there.

A few days later the Indian horde stamped into the mission and began yanking the bedding and then the clothes from the sick. The day was a feast day, August 15, and the few soldiers were caught unprepared while at Mass.

Father Serra and Father Vizcaíno, sitting together in a near-by hut, heard the noise. They stepped to the doorway



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to see what was going on. They reached the doorway just as the boy, José Vegerano, stumbled into the hut and fell dead, an arrow through his lungs and the arrowhead protruding in front.

Father Vizcaíno reached down for the boy, and another arrow struck the padre's hand.

Two guards tried to drive the Indians from the mission, but the answer was an avalanche of arrows. The guards put down their swords in preference to muskets, and this time the muskets were fired in earnest, killing three Indians and wounding more.

The Indians were so surprised, on observing for the first time that the guns could do more than make a noise, that they fled over the ridge of the hill and up the river valley. But in a few days they returned to ask medical treatment for their wounded—musket-ball wounds being so new to them that their own witch doctors admitted being baffled for a cure.

Besides the dead boy and the wounded Father Vizcaíno, the other casualties among the group in camp included the blacksmith, a soldier and one of the enlisted Indians from Lower California.

This affair (the first, though not the last or the most important) resulted in a stockade being constructed around the mission and an order to the Indians that they bring no weapons within throwing distance of the mission thereafter.

The mission as yet was not a month old.

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And though this first little mission was not pretentious, the dedication record helped make up for the deficit:

. . . of the Catholic monarch, Don Carlos III, King of Spain, whom God prosper, defrayed under most ample authority from his Excellency, Don Carlos Francisco de Croix, Marques de Croix, present Viceroy, Governor, and Captain-General of this New Spain, but the most illustrious Don Joseph de Galvez, of the Council and Chamber of his Majesty in the royal and Supreme of the Indies, Intendente of the Army, and Visi-tator General of this New Spain, by the religious of said Apostolic College, San Fernando of Mexico.

The Indians should have known.

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## 6

**M**ATTERS, DURING THE NEXT MONTHS, became worse instead of better. Since the day of the Indian attack nineteen more of the group had died. Not from wounds, but they just died. And the scheduled relief vessel, the *San Antonio*, had not yet returned from Mexico. She was months overdue and, so far as anyone knew, might have gone the way of the lost *San José*.

Portola and his handful of men had returned to the San Diego camp after half a year of tramping the more northern coast in search of the reported bay of Monterey. But their return was no occasion for rejoicing. They reported the search as having been futile and the supposed bay a myth.

All told, then, the life balance of the San Diego camp was a teetering one. No *San Antonio*. No Monterey. No mules. (These had been eaten by Portola's starving men

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during their return to San Diego.) The weary men also had traded most of their clothes to Indians for food along the way. The handful of Spaniards was a dreary bunch, having in abundance only scurvy, plenty of stupidly grinning Indians and plenty of homesickness.

All of this leads to one of San Diego's most familiar legends—the legend that Portola was all for giving up and tailing it back to Mexico with the survivors. The remaining rations of the camp would just about get him and the men there. But if they should wait any longer in San Diego, death was bound to strike the whole group. This is one half of the legend. The other half is that Father Serra during this critical moment of decision—and it certainly could have been a critical moment—begged Portola to remain at least until the morrow. If the relief vessel should not have appeared by evening, he would agree to say good-by to Portola and his band, but Father Serra himself would remain alone among the savages.

So all next day, according to the story, Serra remained upon the small hill above the camp. He remained there kneeling in prayer for the relief vessel, the *San Antonio*, to appear. Exactly at sunset, so the story goes, he saw the tiny flicker of a sail on the horizon far beyond Point Loma, and thus the diminutive colony was saved through God—to become the great harbor city of today.

This story is a natural for dramatic pageantry, and people like to see it in San Diego. And the story does no harm—except to Portola. He is made out to be the villain

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when as a historical fact he was just the opposite. The actual records show that he had no intentions of disobeying original orders by giving up. To have done so would have meant the end not only of his career but also of his pride, and both Spain and New Spain could be annoyed at that time with officers who did not come through. Death, even by starvation, was preferable.

Nor had Portola any intentions of deliberately starving. Already he had sent a small overland party back into Lower California to round up if possible a herd of stock. This stock, along with other provisions, originally had been left there while the overland expedition was passing through en route to the bay of San Diego.

Nor does Father Serra in his own notes depict the crisis as the legend would have it. For Serra was not that kind, and his honesty was as stout as his practicability. He was not one to go out of his way to create pretty stories about himself, and he had no need to do so. The cold facts of his practical accomplishments are foolproof. The gingerbread added to them later by romancers hinders instead of helps the baffling works of this baffling man, a born trouper, a born fanatic, a born banker.

He was not the only one with valiance during that era. Yet, as so often happens, he was the one whose full life was written into a book during the contemporary time, and so his fame reached the public almost immediately while the others went unsung and generally remain unsung to this day. The book—the *Vida*—was written by Serra's life-long

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friend, Father Palou, who hoped that it would result in Father Serra being beatified after death by the Church. This may be one of the reasons why the book, published in 1787, contains so many "miracles"—such as the miracle of the *San Antonio's* sails appearing off San Diego exactly at the right second.

This zest of the faithful Palou to interpret everything through miracles if given half a chance could, in a way, be blamed on the name of the bay itself, a working example. For the original San Diego de Alcalá, we are told, "was canonized in 1588 rather for his pious life and the miracles wrought through him before and after death than for any high position held by him."

So Palou hardly should be blamed for doing the best he could for Serra, even though he did reverse Serra's capabilities.

True, the sails did appear at a most fortunate moment for everybody concerned. But the others, including Portola, had been doing some high-powered praying also. And he had also been doing some practical things in case the sails should not appear. His dispatching of a party back to the Peninsula to bring up more provisions cannot be classed as a miracle, but it could be classed as something.

People on first coming to California these days are likely to become slightly overfed and slightly cynical at having everything pointed out to them as the bygone works of Serra. Pamphlets and the conductors of sight-seeing tours have for a certainty made a habit of attaching everything

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of history to his name. But this is not the fault of Serra. His name, though, happens to be easy to pronounce, is familiar to all, and so—who cares?

The method furthermore is natural, perhaps, since eras of any history can best be remembered when personified by an individual. Nor is there anything one can do about it, or really wants to do about it. The method is a little harsh on the memory of others equally valiant, that is all. Yet such is the way it goes, and has gone these many generations, although southern California also had a Father Fermin Francisco de Lasuen, a contemporary of Serra's and his immediate successor.

Father Lasuen also tramped just as many miles as Serra up and down these thorny canyons, built equally as many missions, was an old man too while doing it (Lasuen being in his eighties when he died on duty) and was more of a diplomat than Serra in getting along with the soldiers and the governors and the few visitors from other nations. But Lasuen had no book written about him.

He was, though, such a gracious personality that in later years the English explorer, Vancouver, after meeting Lasuen in San Diego, was so impressed by the old man that he began naming places after the Spanish priest, such places as the present Point Fermin and the present Point Lasuen near San Pedro. And it was something in those days for an Englishman to give a Spanish name to anything, especially this English explorer who still insisted on calling all of California "New Albion" because Drake had so referred

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to the country more than one hundred and fifty years previous.

But Father Lasuen needed a Father Palou for a biographer.

Anyway, the sails of the *San Antonio* were sighted from the hill at sunset. But in the morning the sea was vacant of sails again. The relief vessel had passed by San Diego without stopping. This was not an accident. She had been ordered by the viceroy to proceed first to the reported port of Monterey under the supposition that Portola's overland party had reached the place. It was all quite a mix-up, with nobody knowing just what was what or who was where.

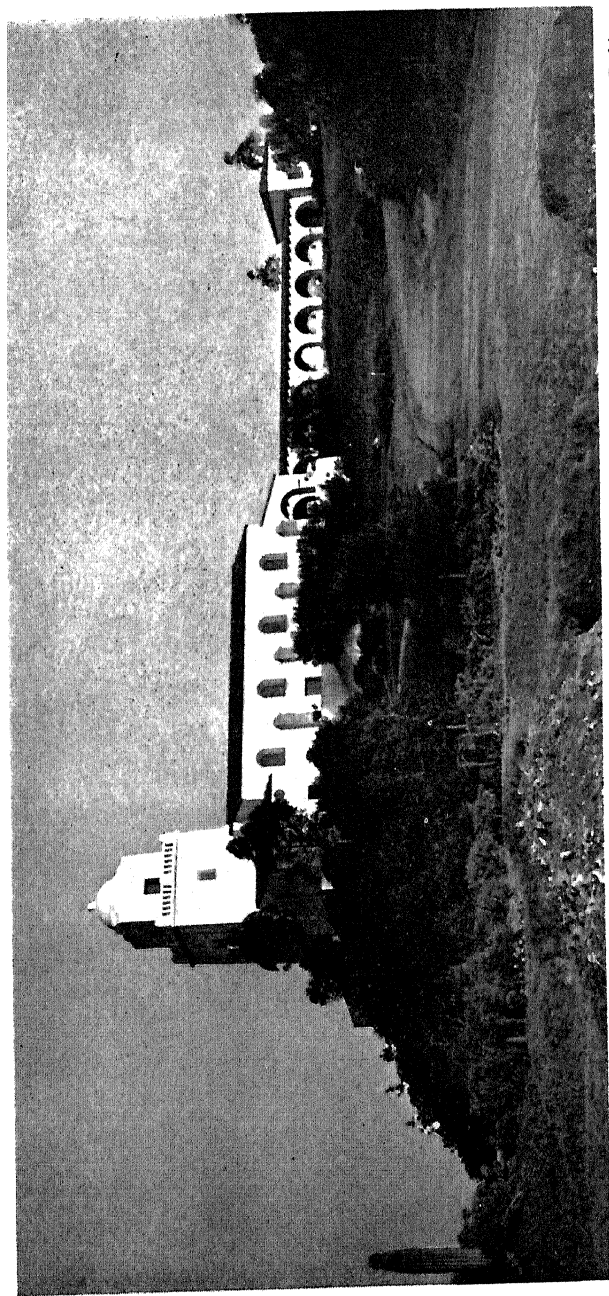
But the *San Antonio*, after cruising north of San Diego, had to put back into San Diego regardless, the reason being that she lost her anchor the third night after being sighted.

Father Palou, in his book on Serra, makes a big play on the sudden loss of this anchor. Palou so much as writes that God threw it overboard in answer to Serra's prayer. But the vessel did turn about and put into San Diego. That is certain. Half her crew was either sick or dead. For she had been absent from San Diego eight months on the cruise which today would be but the matter of days. Yet aboard were the needed provisions—and San Diego was saved.

At least, temporarily.

This familiar story was the one naturally used for the pageant dedicating a new park in San Diego. Presidio Hill is the name of the park, and the title is a hundred-per-cent





*Photograph by L. J. Giddes*

### PRESIDIO HILL

The Plymouth Rock of the Pacific, site of the first settlement of the white race on the Western Coast. In the foreground the remains of the adobe headquarters of the soldiers of "The Royal Presidio of San Diego" as the Spanish called it. On the hilltop Junipero Serra Museum, presented to the City of San Diego by George W. Marston, in 1929.



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correct. For the setting for the pageant was the actual hill of the original camp of 1769-70.

On the day of the pageant this hill, close to the river and the bay, was still quite bleak and quite houseless. Even the identical tip of the hill whereon Father Serra supposedly had spent the whole day in prayer was still bleak. It was all there, the outlines being much the same as in the beginning. And broken bits of the first presidio stuck through the harsh sod. (The year was 1929.) But today the whole hill and hillside, being a memorial park, is bright with foliage, trees, water sprinklers and a museum building. The museum contains many of the old documents and has been built on the lines of a mission, the weathervane being shaped like a cross.

This is one of San Diego's biggest compromises with history, perhaps. But for all of that, Serra and Portola no doubt could still find their way about. For the river bed is still much the same down there and, in summer, dry as usual.

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# 7

THE ANTIQUITY of San Diego as the oldest port of the West would be made more emphatic today, perhaps, if only the citizens could point to some old Indian massacre grounds and say: "Ah." Another Indian fight took place, and a serious one, for the mission was burned, and men were killed. Yet again, as in the case of 1769 when the Indians tried to loot both the *San Carlos* and the first little mission, the affair was one in which hundreds of the aborigines attacked by surprise, then scampered when six injured men and two children managed to find a couple of muskets somewhere and started firing through the flames. But for an old port San Diego today is so lacking in Indian reminders that even visitors rarely bring up the subject. Yet the Indian population, even when conservatively estimated, must have been a vast one. In the region between San Diego and Monterey, a matter of roughly four hun-

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dred or five hundred miles, the estimated number of Indians has varied from 120,000 to 250,000. Yet this may be too many. For where would so many people get enough food along the coast? They were not farmers.

One could divide the lowest estimate by half, leaving 60,000. But whatever their number, we do know that in 1770 the Spaniards, with only forty-three soldiers, more than held their own. Not only did the settlers hold their own against the horde, but this year of 1770 was the year the colonists succeeded in establishing a permanent base in Monterey as well as continuing to hold down the one in San Diego.

Perhaps if Hernando Cortes and Bernal Díaz had been conducting this campaign into the wilderness of California we could feel fairly sure that the Indian villages would have been described as cathedral-like fortresses, and that Spanish bravery alone was responsible for the vanquishing of the "ferocious warriors." For Cortes, in his reports back to the King of Spain and to the Church of the Inquisition, certainly had been no violet for understatement. Nor was his press agent, Bernal Díaz. One or the other, for the sake of Indian posterity, sorely was needed on this campaign in California.

But alas, these two imaginative soldier-writers had been dead some two centuries and more, thereby leaving California's early Indians unrepresented by any runner-up of Montezuma. In fact these early Indians of San Diego and southern California are left represented by nobody.

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Yet the willingness with which the tribes under Cortes accepted slavery (and slavery in the mines) in preference to death could make us suspect that the Indian warriors he faced could not have been so much different in courage from the Indians here in California. At least neither the Mexican Indians nor the California Indians could at any time be mistaken, in this respect, for the Sioux or the Blackfeet. One never hears of these prairie Indians submitting to waiting on tables after an hour of fighting.

This first little handful of California settlers could not be blamed, though, if the Indian fights lacked color. The settlers, even for the sake of a more lively history, could not help it if the natives would swarm by the hundreds now and then to threaten a big show, then scamper at the first strike of a musket.

Nobody seems to know why the Indians organized this second attack on the mission of San Diego. That is, nobody at the time could see any reason. For the Indians meanwhile had docilely submitted to everything the Spaniards had demanded, except wholesale conversions.

The scene of this second attack was the new mission six miles up the river valley. The first mission by the waterfront and the presidio had been abandoned because the soldiers were becoming too familiar with the women neophytes. The padres did not like what was going on, and so constructed the new mission. It had been built only a month, and built by Indian labor. The poor devils, working for a religion they could not understand and did not

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want, had consented nevertheless to work like fools for their own bondage. Whips helped, one Indian as an example having been sentenced to a hundred lashes for tossing a clump of sod at a padre.

One of the most familiar stories concerned with the construction of this mission is a false story. It bears repeating, though, merely in order that others will not believe it when they hear it. The story is that the Indians cut the timbers for the mission from a forest grove fifty or sixty miles distant on a mountain. This portion of the story no doubt is partly true, for natural timber around the bay is—and was—a scarce item. But what definitely is not true is that the timbers, after having been hewed into shape up there by the Indians, were then blessed by the priests and not allowed to touch the ground during the journey to San Diego.

To avoid this sacrilege to the sanctified timber, according to the familiar story, the Indian crews lugged the timbers on their shoulders, each crew carrying each heavy timber a mile or so, then placing the log upon the shoulders of the next crew waiting in readiness. But the story, though pretty, is not accurate. The first padres may have been holy, but they were not silly. Besides, for the heaviest work of dragging, they had by now oxen, mules, cattle, horses and even a couple of heavy carts.

Yet timber always has been a problem around the San Diego coast line, though one would not think so today in glancing at the eucalyptus groves to be seen from the high-

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ways. But these groves are more or less a hangover from a California era beginning in 1909, when everybody was going to get rich by planting eucalyptus seeds imported from Australia. The planters intended to sit around for fifteen years till each tree would be worth five dollars to furniture manufacturers. Promoters sold land under the stimulus that, with six hundred trees to the acre, each acre would net three thousand dollars. New trees meanwhile would be planted and growing for a constant turnover. Though the trees grew into beautiful shapes, they did not grow into the trunk dimensions of their wild sisters in Australia. So the great plan for wholesale riches for everybody—just everybody—went the customary way.

The decorations remain on the landscape, and are appreciated, but they were not here for the padres during mission building. Nor was the forest which at one time grew on Point Loma. Timber groves were sighted there during Cabrillo's visit and during the visit of Vizcaíno. But between their departure and the arrival of the padres a forest fire wiped out the groves, although stumps and relics of stumps are sometimes found there today, underground, the same as on parts of North Island more recently.

And so the Indians, in obtaining timbers for the new mission, certainly had no push-over. And if in 1775 they felt like celebrating the completion by burning it, we perhaps can see their view on the matter. They were cowardly, no doubt, and they were noisy braggarts. They would rather talk about what good fighters they were than



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fight. But they did have their own few family laws and were rough on wives caught playing around. They usually punished such a wife by deforming her face with a club until even the Spanish soldiers would not want her, woman-desperate though these Spanish bachelors proved themselves to be.

The presence of these visitors no longer was considered absolutely amusing. The truth finally penetrated even the most stupid of the natives.

These visitors to the bay, too, remained few, very few, the number being as few as ever. For as soon as new ones arrived from Mexico, others would leave San Diego northward to establish missions and garrisons elsewhere, such as at Monterey, San Gabriel, San Juan Capistrano. And everywhere the Indians, still bewildered by guns, were being whipped around and put to work, an extreme novelty. To them something seemed wrong somewhere. Their own huts for the most part were of baked mud and branches and certainly were no attribute to world architecture. Yet the coastal climate was mild, frost a rarity, and they lived outside their huts far more than inside of them. A laborious structure as big as a mission did seem to them the epitome of uselessness. Yes, they would burn it.

The San Diego padres had been having such a poor harvest in souls that the sudden baptismals of sixty neophytes in one day as an opener for the new mission had, to put it mildly, cheered them. They presumed that the Lord's war at last was won. These neophytes, virtually the first con-

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verts, had their own sleeping quarters within the mission grounds and, as it turned out later, their own questionable role in the battle.

But the real instigators were two older neophytes of longer standing. They had been charged by the padres with having stolen a fish from an old woman. Rather than face the customary punishment of being flogged, the two Indians escaped from the mission to the hills. The two went from village to village, talking loudly and long on what a good idea it would be for all the tribes to unite and kill the few Spaniards of San Diego.

The same idea was fostered by Indian orators visiting from the more daring tribes of the Colorado River region. All in all, the number of Indians who gladly assembled for the attack the night of November 4 easily could have been at least a thousand. The records certainly point to the fact that there were a lot of them. Also, they must have been successfully secret about it, for the eleven persons of Spanish blood in the mission at the time had retired to bed as usual.

The Indians divided their number into two parties, one party to attack the mission while the other party simultaneously attacked the presidio six miles away on the waterfront. The Indians knew that only a few soldiers were there, not more than a half-dozen fit for duty.

But right here is where the California Indians needed a definite leader, preferably some leader with the generalship of a Sioux. For the party assigned to attack the mission

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became too enthusiastic and did not allow time enough for the other party to reach the presidio. And this other party, on looking back up Mission Valley, saw the mission already in flames. This second party presumed that the flames would arouse the presidio sentries. The huge band of Indians turned back to join in the mission holocaust. Though they would have outnumbered the presidio soldiers a hundred to one, the Indians still preferred their old time-tried method of taking no chances.

The first Indian mob started firing the mission at the first rush. The roofs, being of tule, were soon crackling. The flames awakened the three sleeping soldiers supposedly assigned to guard the mission, and also awakened the two sleeping padres, Luis Jaume and Vicente Fuster.

Father Jaume, unable to believe what he was seeing and the yells he was hearing, walked boldly towards the mad Indians. He was still the padre, each inch of him, and he said to them: "Love God, my children."

For answer they clubbed him and carried him away.

The mission's two blacksmiths, José Arroyo and Felipe Romero, were asleep in the smithy. Unable to find a musket, Arroyo grabbed a piece of metal and rushed out. He was hit instantly by arrows. He fell dead in the doorway.

The other blacksmith, Romero, hunted for the musket and found it. He fired from behind the barricade of his forge. His aim was adequate. The first Indian of the night was killed. The sight so confused the other Indians that the blacksmith was allowed a moment to leap out of the

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smithy. He joined the soldiers in the barracks. His arrival made a total of four now—four against a thousand. Soon they were joined from somewhere by the carpenter, José Urselino. But he already was bleeding from arrow wounds.

Two boys, relatives of a soldier, reached the barracks next. The boys had been visiting the mission. Father Fuster, the other padre, came in also. So now six men and two boys were inside the barracks—but the barracks itself was on fire.

Carrying the wounded carpenter, the little group dashed for refuge into a friar's hut adjoining. But it too whirled into flames as soon as the eight entered.

Next they remembered an adobe hut not yet completed. The hut still lacked a wall and a roof. But the three adobe walls at least would not burn. The men and boys ran through the arrows to make a final stand within the three walls. All were badly hurt, two soldiers being completely disabled.

The Indians closed in upon the open side and fired arrows point-blank into the group trying its best to get re-organized within the three walls. One of the party had snatched a copper kettle from the burning hut. He now used the kettle as a shield for all. Another found two bales of boxes. Slight as they were, these boxes were tossed end on end for a barricade. The copper kettle was set on top.

The absence of a roof was fortunate. It would have been of tule and would have caught fire. The Indians tossed torches over the top. They fell upon the men and threat-

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ened their small supply of gunpowder, a sack containing two dozen pounds.

Father Fuster protected the sack by sitting on it.

The group had two muskets. These were reloaded while arrows sang against the boxes and the kettle and while torches and rocks rained from above.

If allowed to escape, the men promised the Virgin a fast of nine Saturdays, the priest a novena, and each survivor a Mass. When the first musket finally was loaded, Corporal Rocha fired from the flimsy barricade.

One shot was enough. An Indian sat down, tried to rise and went down again, this time flat on his stomach. The thousand Indians changed their war cries to grunts of fear. They backed away from the open side of the hut.

But Corporal Rocha was not through. The others in the hut continued loading for him, and he continued firing, the two muskets alternating back and forth this way until—suddenly—the air was as free of arrows as the near-by grounds were free of Indians.

The six men and two boys were smeared with blood. Some were too badly wounded to move. But those who could move crawled out from behind the boxes, stood up and looked around. Not an Indian remained in sight anywhere.

That is, until the sixty neophytes rushed out of their sleeping quarters, supposedly, and asked if anybody had been hurt.

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They said they had been made prisoners in their sleeping quarters by the attacking Indians.

But what seemed peculiar about the neophytes' declaration was that each neophyte was well armed with bow and arrows—even while talking. They had not been allowed to carry weapons into the mission or to have them around while there.

When asked to explain this phenomenon, they said they had snatched the weapons from the bad Indians and had used the weapons for driving them away. Indeed, the faster the neophytes talked, the more appealing to them seemed the idea of claiming the victory as their own.

But the Spaniards for the moment were not so concerned with holding a third degree on the neophytes as in seeking their aid in hunting the lost Father Jaume.

His body, naked, mutilated and containing eighteen arrow wounds, was found close to the dry river bed. According to Palou's notes, the only parts of Jaume's body to escape mutilation were his consecrated hands.

Two of the neophytes agreed to run with messages to the presidio. They found everyone there asleep, including the sentries. They were asleep despite the midnight noise, despite the fact that the sky over the burning mission was still a boisterous red and the burning mission itself in plain sight the six miles up the valley.

The presidio at the time was housing a corporal and ten soldiers. But four of the soldiers were on the sick list, and two of the others were in the stocks. One of the sleepy

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sentries said he had noticed the flaming sky but had presumed it to be the moon rising.

Anyway, had the thousand Indians followed through with their original plans of destroying both the presidio and the mission simultaneously, the natives no doubt could have made a complete cleanup, and the Spaniards of San Diego would have been no more—for a while.

As it was, the mission was ashes. Father Jaume was dead. The blacksmith Arroyo was dead. And the carpenter Urselino was to die a few days later of his wounds.

Word of the disaster, of course, was rushed to the other soldiers who had gone to Monterey for the construction of the mission there. And to Father Serra, the padre president, in his new headquarters at Carmelo. So most of the widely scattered group congregated once again in San Diego, the mother bay, to see just what was what and to hold services for the dead.

But Serra was more heartened than downhearted. "God be praised," were his words on hearing the news. "Now the soil is watered; now will the reduction of the Diegueños be complete!"

Jaume was truly a martyr now, the first, and as such his fate was more envied than pitied by the other friars.

Portola, the soldier-governor, on hearing the news is charged by the missionaries with having declared: "Thank God, no soldiers were killed." This charge, whether right or wrong, is merely added to show how no love was lost between the soldiers and the friars even then.

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Anyway, the construction of San Diego's third mission, the one which stands today on the same spot six miles up the river valley from the harbor, was started immediately. And once more the Indians, having had their night of fun, allowed themselves to be subjected to the heavy work of building.

Time naturally defaced the structure, since more than a century and a half is a lot of years for any building. But a fund was raised not so long ago for the reconstruction of the mission and the grounds. So now it stands for all to see and to visit and to photograph and to ask questions about, the lines being the same original lines. And the body of Father Jaume is buried there between the altars.



TODAY San Diego's ceiling is speckled with planes. And at night the red, white and green running lights throw strange stars all around above us. During force-battle practice we on the coast line see the spitting flames, and visitors say: "Is that an earthquake?" We answer: "No. Just practice." Life goes on, and elsewhere lives are ending quickly, and elsewhere on earth the vibrations are not the vibrations of practice. It will always be thus, we are told, here or there, there or here. So how childish does it seem to be recording the simple note that the San Diego mission soon enough became the first California ranch.

But it did.

And in the same token the waterfront of San Diego became the site of California's first public executions. They were four chieftains, Asean, Aalcurin, Aschil and Tagui-agui.

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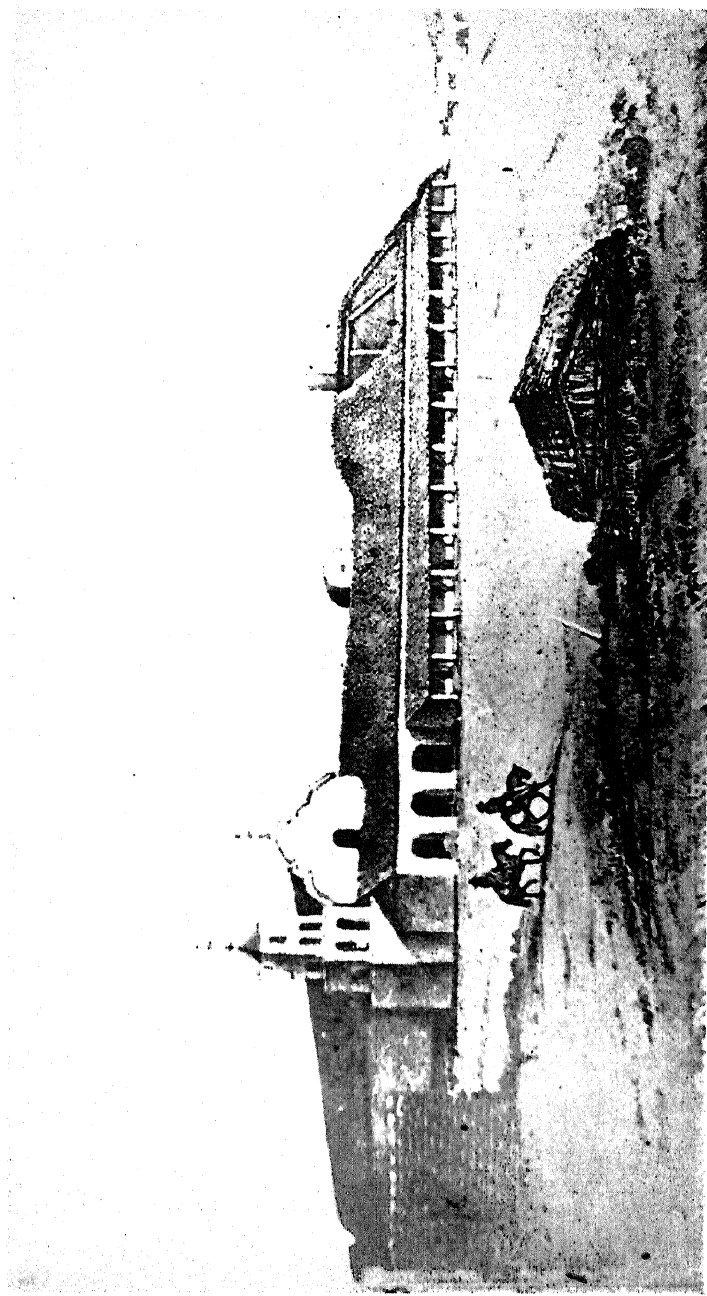
Likely, the story of no new country is exactly pretty; nor, as in the case of California, merely a succession of lovely mission bells pealing at twilight. For someone has to work, and the soldiers certainly did not.

We naturally wonder, too, why in the story of a port so much attention should be given to the establishment of a mission. But the San Diego mission was the port of San Diego also. The mission was the reason the first trading vessels arrived, and the mission remained more or less the reason why they came here until almost up to the time of the first whalers.

The mission began producing, so much so that the little *San Carlos* and the little *San Antonio* began carrying more products out of port than the vessels ever had brought in. These products for the most part were shipped north for the benefit of the newer missions just getting their start.

In the same manner that the older missions of Mexico supplied the original supplies and stock for the march on San Diego's harbor, the San Diego mission in turn became the clearinghouse of supplies for the newer missions northward. The Jesuits, as we know, had founded the Lower California missions. But with the expulsion of the Jesuits in favor of the Franciscans, the latter group not only assumed the Mexican missions but all the material therein, including as much livestock as could be pushed to San Diego overland.

That the padres of San Diego were smart ranchers is attested by the observation that, of their original eighteen



*Herbert R. Fitch Collection*

SAN DIEGO MISSION, 1846



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head of cattle, the mission had acquired (by the year 1800) six hundred cattle. This became the nucleus for the great hide trade which ultimately drew to San Diego the constant flow of Yankee vessels from New England, especially from Boston.

We cannot avoid the mission, then, whether looking up the river valley or looking upon the waterfront.

We who live here may be fed to the hilt with what perhaps can be called California mission lore. Still, in looking back, we cannot avoid the importance of the missions.

We who live here may be surfeited by the week-end battalions in their wild-eyed pursuit up canyons and over hills for more missions to conquer by camera and free verse. Still we cannot avoid the early importance of the missions.

They were the industry. They were the ranches. They were the villages. They were the law. And the labor cost nothing.

Whether the Indians liked it or not, they did have to work, usually from daylight to darkness. They were working for Jesus, but the soldiery were the ones with the guns, and the overseers the whips. If, as in the case of San Diego, the natives appeared a bit slow about volunteering to be converted, we have the description of Alfred Robinson in his aged book, *Life in California*, that: “. . . it is not unusual to see numbers of them driven along by the alcaides, and under the whip's lash forced to the very doors of the sanctuary.”

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But the mission was producing. In addition to the six hundred cattle, it also had (according to the inventory of 1800) six thousand sheep and almost nine hundred horses. Nor was the mission acreage confined to stock. The padres soon developed an irrigation system from the haphazard San Diego River. They built a dam above the mission and also a water tunnel, and so remarkable was their engineering that much of the dam is still there, although several really bad torrents have swept down the valley since then.

Irrigation was all the valley needed for the raising of grain, preferably barley. The valley is not considered much of a grain-raising section today, but more of a dairy section. The whole of the San Diego region, for that matter, is not much given to grain. But the padres decidedly made the most of what there was. If one section proved wrong for what they wanted to raise, they experimented until they found the right section. They had the choice of the whole region for their property. Miles meant nothing, although forty square miles generally is given as the estimate of the mission's territory.

The working of forty square miles required a lot of Indians. But to say that the Indians, following the attack of 1776 upon the mission, refrained from causing any trouble thereafter, would be a wrong statement to make. Threats of uprisings periodically were rumored, and sometimes uprisings were attempted, but at no time did the natives have a real leader. Those who would go on the war-path either were shot on the spot or else hauled to the

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presidio and flogged. Or else, as in the case of the four chieftains, they were given a peculiar trial and then executed publicly.

An Indian's soul remained more important than his body. Already the natives were beginning to droop, not only from the forced labor, but also from that disease relayed to them by the soldiery from Mexico.

The cross and the sword were supposed to be making the subjugation hand in hand for the triumph of Spain. Yet which hand dominated during the arguments between officer and padre depended exclusively on which was the better talker and which—for the moment—had the bigger political influence back in the headquarters of Mexico.

The mission would have been helpless without the soldiers, few and scattered though they were. But at the same time the soldiers were dependent on the mission for food, and likewise caused no end of embarrassment to the padres who did do their best to guard the women neophytes.

So, as one glances through the files today, the files of almost any of the missions and garrisons, he will find that most of the dogfights between the few soldiers and the many Indians had as a background the same old world cause of it all—women.

This same old world cause of it all is what, ultimately, led to California's first public executions—the execution of Asean, Aalcuirin, Aschil and Taguiagui on San Diego's waterfront.

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The affair really had no definite start, but rather had many starts more or less of the same character. One of the starts was when two soldiers one afternoon lassoed a chieftain's wife. The subsequent relations were not platonic.

The next afternoon the two soldiers were guarding a herd of stock when arrows began flying in the soldiers' direction from the bow of the chieftain. The soldiers were not hit, but they fired back and killed the chieftain.

Other soldiers, hearing the firing, galloped over to see what was the trouble. When told what the Indian had tried to do with his arrows, the corporal of the soldiers was so angry that he cut off the head of the dead chieftain and mounted it on a pole for other Indians to see.

The affair did not end there, but it gained momentum through a reverse twist. This was when a chieftain himself was reported by other Indians to be furnishing women to the soldiers. The Indians asked the officers to use their power to discourage the chieftain, who seemed to be more of a friend of the soldiers than of the Indians.

Nothing was done about the complaint, and the soldiers laughed. This was when the Indians came right out and threatened action. They threatened to destroy not only the near-by San Juan Capistrano mission but also all the neophytes in it.

So a corporal (the same corporal who had cut off the chieftain's head) was sent with five men from San Diego



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to punish the troublemakers. According to his report he "did by killing three and wounding several."

The Indians became even more annoyed, especially the relatives of the three Indians who had been killed. Not only did the free natives of the hills begin talking, but also the laboring Indians of the various ranches of the mission. An uprising was feared again. Another party of eight soldiers, in command of the same corporal, went out once more. Their orders were to punish with forty lashes any Indian anywhere who showed insolence.

While carrying out these orders, the corporal surprised a group of "the foe"—the corporal's own wording—inside a hut in a village called Pamo. Two Indians came outside the hut and he killed them. This rather discouraged the others from appearing, so he set fire to the hut and burned them to death.

At each village where bows, arrows and clubs were found "as evidence of an uprising," the villagers were flogged. In time this flogging, forty lashes to an Indian, became so tiresome to the soldiers that they turned their whips over to four minor chieftains, already whipped, and asked them to carry on. The chieftains shook their heads in the negative, and so were bound and carried to San Diego for trial.

The trial did not last long, the four chieftains immediately being convicted by the military "of having plotted to kill Christians in spite of the mercy shown them in the king's name for past offenses."

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They—Asean, Aalcuirin, Aschil and Taguiagui—were condemned to death by Sergeant Ortega. The sentence read:

Deeming it useful to the service of God, the king, and the public weal, I sentence them to a violent death by musket-shots on the 11th at 9 A.M., the troops to be present at the execution under arms, also all the Christian rancherias subject to the San Diego mission, that they may be warned to act righteously.

The sergeant then summoned Fathers Lasuen and Figuer from the mission to prepare the condemned chiefs for death, the sergeant writing in his note to the Fathers: "You will co-operate for the good of their souls in the understanding that if they do not accept the salutary waters of holy baptism they die on Saturday morning; and if they do—they die all the same."

Which they did, near the waterfront garrison of San Diego.

After this episode the conversions in the San Diego mission region, still holding the lowest record of souls saved in California, had another drop. An officer tried to trump up business by visiting more distant villages in search of neophyte recruits. But on returning to San Diego he reported that the villagers, "though they did him no harm, would not receive him in their houses, would not receive his gifts, looked with indifference on his paintings of hell and heaven, and refused to kiss the Christ."

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The officer wondered why.

Yet from the labor of Indians was born this first produce-shipping port of the North American coast; the mission era starting, we must remember, around the time of the Declaration of Independence—or earlier.

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## 9

**T**HOUGH THIS IS THE STORY of today's port, yesterday's port, and possibly a touch of tomorrow's port, the main danger of this backward glance at one's own harbor is the temptation to become smugly opinionated.

Precise dates also get in the way, so much so that one is likely to regard the past as a picket fence, each picket carved with a date. And such could be regarded as The Past.

But we know, as in our own lives, that the past is more the blending of memories both big and little. Nor can we, for the life of us, segregate into neat items those thousands and thousands of peculiar incidents which when blended together compose our present. There are too many of them, and they overlap too much. And when we presume to be

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segregating them we are, at best, merely wishing we had the power.

So it goes with us, and so it goes with this harbor.

The visit of George Vancouver aboard the English exploring vessel, the *Discovery*, might, for instance, be furiously important to this early port.

But so too was another Englishman, Captain James Cook, who did not put in at all.

Or even the remark that the port, with its mission as a clearinghouse, really started around the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This remark cannot be made quite so definitely. Yet, on thinking it over, it may be as right as wrong. For around this time the diminutive colony had just ridden out a very ugly famine, and at last the first experimental crops of the friars were beginning to bear more than the seed planted for them.

Even the blunt soldiers, bluntly described as they were, no doubt had blunt thoughts about their own welfare. Scarcely any of them had asked to be assigned to California. Their pay, if ever any of it did come through, was a joke. The pay was scratched right off again as being owed to their government for food, clothes and whatever else the men could obtain. Of goods shipped to them the soldiers were charged 150 per cent over the original cost, the difference held payable for cost of transportation.

But the soldiers were lucky to get anything, even at that cost. For the sailors manning those tiny tubs, the *San Carlos* and the *San Antonio*, had to be shanghaied aboard in

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Mexico, most of them. The voyage from San Blas to San Diego against those head winds had received too big a reputation for deathly terror. Two months, three months, and sometimes four months northbound was a long grind. No sailor in his right mind cared to try it twice, and few cared to try it once.

But when Captain James Cook, in his endurance-contest cruises over the Pacific, made his greatest discovery of all—a remedy against scurvy—the influence was felt almost immediately in the whole setup at the bay of San Diego.

The toll of sailor lives between Mexico and San Diego, to be sure, was partly nullified. But this same control over scurvy was to make the Pacific anybody's Pacific now. Foreign captains and crews no longer were to regard as such a lopsided gamble with death the cruises around the Horn (in the case of the English and Yankees) or down from the Alaskan waters (in the case of the Russians). Which country would be the first—England or Russia—to attempt seizing California from the few Spanish colonists?

The Russians already were moving as far south as the Farallone Islands off San Francisco. England as usual was bristling at Spain, and Spain as usual was bristling at England. The scattered Spaniards of California at no time felt as politically comfortable as we imagine when we look at the etchings of their supposed carefree life with guitar and wishing well.

They felt no fear of the United States. Nor was this strange. For at that time who were the Americans? And

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where were they? On the other side of the continental world someplace, the Louisiana Purchase being an item of 1803. Nor could the Spaniards see how the Americans could penetrate the wilderness even as far as the Louisiana territory, either before or after the purchase.

The Americans were disregarded as of no danger. But not the English. And when the first Englishman put into San Diego the colony was far more frightened than pleased. The English vessel also was the first foreign vessel to visit San Diego. Thus, the colony being doubly frightened, the members were ultrahospitable, and there was nothing they would not do for George Vancouver and his officers and crew of the *Discovery*.

The year was 1793.

During this special period of transition on the harbor the dates may move backwards as frequently as forwards. But then, also, do the tides of the bay. And Vancouver, famous and charming though he might be, was considered quite openly a seagoing spy deliberately sent by England to sound out San Diego's defenses.

These defenses, in turn, consisted mostly of three small popgun cannons occasionally used at times to make a harmless boom-noise for startling the Indians.

But even at that, one can say in all honesty that San Diego's bay since the day of the first settler has not for a single hour undergone the sensation of not being a military base.

True, there were times when the presidio had but one

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soldier present who was well enough to walk, his few companions being scattered on duty between San Diego and Monterey.

Or there were other times, such as in 1774, when Governor Rivera reported back to Mexico that some of his soldiers had no guns, that others had guns but no swords, and that others had neither guns nor swords. This may be one of the reasons why these soldiers, for the sake of their own lives, often overstepped from caution to downright ugliness at each rumor of a native uprising.

The unexpected arrival of Vancouver was the spark which sent the colony into a rhapsody of plans for establishing a definite fort for guarding the harbor's entrance. In his reports back to England he described the bay as a knock-over for any man-of-war. The presidio itself he described as a rickety joke. Nor did the explorer need to be a military strategist to know this. Nor did the colony need to read his mail to know that he knew. One glance was all he needed, then on with the social dances—during the rest of his twelve-day stay.

The colony, in fright, put on its best entertainment for him and his officers. But he preferred the company of Father Lasuen. The two had a good time together rummaging over charts, correcting them, and making nautical observations. The total score of the visit was that Vancouver gave himself a splendid twelve days, he gave the colony a scare, and he gave the padre a barrel organ for the mission.



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Yet from such minor beginnings as these, the scare and all, the naturalness of San Diego's harbor as the military base of the Pacific Coast was not to stop being emphasized until—until today the navy literally is San Diego's principal industry.

Vancouver made a notation that the main fort should be established upon the peculiar peninsula which reaches out into the bottleneck of the harbor just inside the entrance. This peninsula, a part of Point Loma, was layered with cobblestones, so was called by the Spaniards Point Guijarros. But in years to come the Yankee vessels from Boston arriving in San Diego for hides were to use these cobblestones as ballast for the homeward cruise around the Horn. Hence the present name of the point is Ballast Point.

One may as well add that these stones, when reaching Boston, are supposed to have been used for paving some of the present waterfront streets there. But Old Boston itself would have to be the authority for that surmise.

Following Vancouver's visit a Spanish fort was built on Ballast Point. One English warning had been enough to raise the money. And in time this fort fired cannon balls. But not at an Englishman. Nor a Russian. But at an American—a Yankee trader called the *Lelia Byrd*.

Today the entire tip of Point Loma containing Ballast Point is a fort, Fort Rosecrans. The guns, scattered over an immense mileage, are concealed, of course. Yet perhaps even this great fort is old-fashioned now, navy guns being

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what they are. But the fort is still a fort, nevertheless, occupying the highest splendor of Point Loma.

And joining the fort on the ocean side (just to show life's incongruities) are the lavish acres of the Theosophical Society of Universal Brotherhood.

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## 10

**Y**ET OF ALL the hundreds and hundreds of big guns afloat and stationary in this port, the only time any "big" gun has been fired at anybody who fired back was in—1803.

There is, perhaps, no other harbor which throughout its entire career as a military fortification and base can claim, or would care to claim, such a peculiar record. For even then—in 1803—the fort gun was fired not at an enemy but at a poacher.

This is the battle which has come down to us as the "*Lelia Byrd* Affair." And being San Diego's only naval engagement during the harbor's four hundred years, we who are here have to make the most of it, although nobody was killed, nobody hurt. The fort more than the vessel was the first to call off all bets by ceasing the firing.

The battle can be blamed on sea otters.

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When Captain James Cook was cruising the California coast (some twenty-five years preceding the battle), he happened to take aboard a small cargo of sea-otter furs. To his surprise the demand for them in China was so amazing that any price whatsoever could be asked and received.

Another Englishman, a Captain Hanna, took the tip while over there and made a special crossing from China to California especially for the furs. Returning with them to China, he made a profit of about a thousand per cent on each fur. He was rich. His example was copied by other English captains, and the rush was on.

News of the new game reached the traders of New England. So into San Diego's harbor of an August morning of 1800 appeared San Diego's first American vessel. She was the *Betsy*, Captain Charles Winship.

She remained ten days to look things over. In turn she was looked over by the puzzled Spaniards. For the American vessel, being the first they had seen, carried ten guns and nineteen men.

She was told she could not have furs from San Diego. But Captain Winship did not mind, his holds already being secretly stocked with enough of them to guarantee a successful cruise. He had picked them up at San Blas. He departed graciously, promising to return someday.

The next American vessel did much the same the following year. She was the *Enterprise*, Captain Ezekiel Hubbell. She carried ten guns also, and twenty-one men. When the captain asked permission to trade for furs and was

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answered in the negative, he departed. That was all there was to it, seemingly. For he too already had his furs aboard.

But the system of merely answering "no" did not work quite so simply with the next American, Captain John Brown of the *Alexander*. From Boston he brought his vessel into San Diego a year and some months following the departure of the *Enterprise*. He needed furs. He was determined to get furs.

We naturally wonder why the colonists of California did not jump at the chance to trade in otter furs with outsiders. But the attitude of the comandante of San Diego was symbolic of the other few colonies along the California coast. The reasons were several, but the main reason was the same old persistent fear of Russia and England.

The abundant furs with their regal value would serve as one more come-on to these countries to move in and seize the territory. The Spaniards would have preferred that there were no otters. The otters were serving as a floating advertisement, bringing more and more foreign vessels which otherwise would have stayed away.

The comandantes of the various garrisons of California were merely obeying strict orders from home, all the more so after the English sloop of war, the *Mercedes*, came unexpectedly into San Diego in 1799 before the new fort was finished. She had departed peacefully enough, but might return. Sea otters would be the reason.

Though the Spanish comandantes refused to sell furs, or even to talk about them, the padres of the missions were

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not so particular. Through their Indian neophytes most of the pelts were collected and smuggled and sold, the money being cached inside the missions. This was one more reason why the officers and the missions rarely got along well together, and why their official mail back to Mexico was habitually filled with derogatory remarks. The officers had refused to do this or that for the missions, or had done this or that to the missions. The officers would say the same about the Fathers. It was the same old story of trying to run a country with dual control.

The Fathers felt they had a right to trade otter pelts for supplies and to sell the pelts too for their Order. With the missions, then, the subsequent Boston skippers communicated if possible immediately on arriving.

This was the method used by Captain John Brown of the *Alexander*. He had been tipped off to the secret by the two previous American skippers who had unsuccessfully tried San Diego. At least they had learned why they were unsuccessful in San Diego, and this was enough to learn on a first trip.

Captain Brown, on his arrival with the *Alexander*, had a heartbreaking story all prepared for the comandante. The *Alexander's* crew was so hard hit with scurvy that at least nine of his men would have to be removed ashore immediately if they were to recover. Also, the vessel desperately needed fresh provisions and wood.

The Spanish comandante fell for the story. He granted the American vessel a stay of eight days. But under no

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condition must any of the men, sick or well, go near the new fort. The American skipper agreed and was grateful, very grateful.

On the fifth day of the vessel's stay the Spanish comandante searched the *Alexander* and found 491 otter skins aboard. These were roughly valued at \$40,000 at that time, and poor Captain Brown was absolutely mystified how they had gotten there.

The comandante confiscated the furs. He had them taken ashore and locked inside the fort. He suggested that the Yankee depart. Captain Brown had no other alternative but to accept the suggestion. But he had been close to what he wanted, very close, closer than any other Boston skipper so far in San Diego.

So it remained for the next Bostoner to do the trick, the next Bostoner being the *Lelia Byrd*, Captain William Shaler.

The *Alexander*, after leaving San Diego, spoke the *Lelia Byrd* off Lower California. The two captains compared notes, and the *Lelia Byrd's* arrival in San Diego was within three weeks of the *Alexander's* departure.

The comandante himself boarded the *Lelia Byrd*, and with an escort of soldiers.

The comandante expressed sorrow to Captain Shaler over the possibility of any sailors aboard being sick with scurvy, and also suggested a remedy which could be used aboard the vessel herself—out at sea.

Captain Shaler bowed to the comandante and thanked

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him. But the crew was fairly well, it seemed, although the vessel did need water and fresh provisions. Would the captain be asking too big a favor of the comandante if a few members of the crew could go ashore to purchase the supplies?

The comandante bowed and said he could not think of causing the American so much inconvenience. But if the captain would supply an itemized list of what was most needed, the comandante himself would do his best to obtain the supplies.

The captain bowed his thanks and suggested that he send a working party ashore to bring the supplies out to the vessel when obtained.

The comandante replied that this would not be at all necessary, as San Diego had Indians ashore to do all such manual work. Wherewith the comandante departed, leaving a guard of five soldiers aboard.

The American sailors immediately developed a lifelong friendship with the five soldiers. Secrets and dirty stories were exchanged over rum. Everybody became happy, and by evening the five soldiers became too sleepy to talk any more—but not until after they had given the suggestion that, in regard to pelts, the fellow to see ashore was José Velasquez, the corporal at the fort.

After nightfall a shore party of Americans landed near the fort, contacted the corporal, and everything was much as the soldiers had described. The corporal knew the locality of a thousand confiscated furs, but tonight would



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not be a good night. Better wait a few more nights. The crew returned with the information to Captain Shaler.

The right night arrived. The *Lelia Byrd's* boat quickly contacted the beach not far from the fort. Everything worked as it should for the Americans. The boat was loaded with mission furs hidden there, as per plans, and carried back to the vessel. But another trip in the boat would be necessary to get another pile hidden elsewhere, in keeping with the plans.

From this second trip the boat did not return.

Captain Shaler, beginning to suspect something, paced the deck till daylight, and still the boat did not return.

He ordered the Spanish guards aboard to be disarmed. He had them sent below and locked up. He went ashore in a second boat and took with him four sailors, each armed.

During the night the comandante, accompanied by a group of mounted soldiers, had descended by magic upon the American sailors making their second trip. These sailors had not only been captured but had been bound from their feet to their shoulders and left to lie the night through upon the beach, three Spanish guards standing over them.

The officials were sports about having won the contest and smiled at Captain Shaler as he stomped up the shore towards them. But Captain Shaler was not smiling. Instead, he and his four armed sailors rushed the guards,

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knocked them over, snatched their guns, dipped the guns into the bay and unbound the American prisoners.

It all happened rather rapidly—so rapidly that, the next thing the Spaniards knew, the sailors and Captain Shaler were pulling back to the *Lelia Byrd*.

The Spaniards had been accustomed so long to the ways of the cowed Indians that this sudden show of opposition was something new. But, now that the surprise was over, if the *Lelia Byrd* wanted a fight there would be one.

The battle call was sounded.

The entire colony of San Diego hurried the long distance around the bay to the fort, but more to view the coming spectacle than to take part in it.

Fort Guijarros (Ballast Point) contained a battery of six nine-pounders. Corporal Velasquez, who really had been sincere in his efforts to dispose of the furs to the Americans, was now equally sincere in his efforts to redeem himself with the infuriated comandante. The corporal would sink the *Lelia Byrd*, and do it all by himself if necessary.

The collected crowd of spectators numbered about a hundred. Of these a few joined Corporal Velasquez at the guns. More might have joined if they had known how to work them. But few knew the workmanship, not even the soldiers.

Corporal Velasquez opened the show strictly according to ritual: a blank shot first as warning, followed by a real one, a solid one.

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The procedure of hoisting sail on the *Lelia Byrd* was taking time. More time was used in trying to swing the vessel around towards the harbor entrance. The Yankee vessel, in her endeavor to escape, would have to run broadside to the fort's batteries.

The *Lelia Byrd* had guns of her own, six small ones. All were moved to the starboard to face the fort. Their range was short. The answering fire would have to wait until the vessel closed in broadside to the fort while endeavoring to pass.

For almost an hour the *Lelia Byrd*, while hoisting sail, weighing anchor, and trying to swing about in a slight breeze, remained the target for the fort's battery and for Corporal Velasquez.

When the *Lelia Byrd* finally was ready to make the run through the bottleneck, Captain Shaler remembered the five Spanish guards below. He suggested to them they come up on deck for air. They replied that they were not in need of fresh air. He persuaded them to come up by having them brought up. He arranged them alongside the rail facing the Spanish guns.

The five prisoners were exceedingly unhappy about it, and each time their fellow countrymen fired a ball at the vessel the ex-guards pantomimed a request to shore to send no more.

They pantomimed by falling upon their faces as if struck, as indeed they could have been, the rigging and sails and hull being badly damaged already. Nor as yet had

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the *Lelia Byrd* been in position to fire a shot in exchange.

When she did come into position, exactly broadside the fort, she fired all her guns at once. She followed with a second broadside as soon as the guns could be reloaded. But by now Corporal Velasquez was the only one left inside the fort. His companions had departed out the back entrance and up the hill of Point Loma.

The *Lelia Byrd*, unhindered now, continued through the channel and out toward sea.

She made one more brief stop. This was after the captain had asked the ex-guards if they would like to be placed ashore. They replied in the affirmative by dropping to their knees and thanking the Virgin instead of the captain.

“How’s that?” the captain asked.

“Vivan, vivan los Americanos!” The reply was unanimous and correct this time. So the captain had the men put onto the beach to walk home.

Thus ended the naval battle of San Diego, its one and only.

But from today’s harbor sight-seeing cruises the battle sounds too complicated through a megaphone and takes too long. The cruise conductors prefer to forget it.

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## 11

**WE** WHO HAVE DEVOTED so many hours pursuing bloody history upon this waterfront, and under it, have been faced with another disappointment. Or rather two of them.

The first was the inconsiderateness of Hippolyte de Bouchard, the Frenchman, in not blowing up the local port after promising to do so, and after he had sacked most of the other villages along the California coast.

He made history for them, but not for us exactly. And then, too, there is the dearth of old cannon balls on the bottom of this harbor.

This matter of old cannon balls should be handled first, perhaps, for in the quest of them I for one made myself an early nuisance. And so the account of Bouchard can wait a moment or so, but not forever. For, although he did

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not sack San Diego, in keeping with his announced schedule, he certainly is remembered for the fright he gave—such a fright that cannon balls were kept heated red hot over at the fort waiting his arrival.

Thereby, one would presume, a harbor with as many cannons as this harbor has seen, and with so much dredging and dredgers, would be a haven for the cannon balls of the old school.

In a final quest for them, some ten years ago, I boarded the dismantled dredger *Oakland*, fifty-two years old at the time. The pilothouse had been hoisted off the dredger and placed on the adjoining pier. The watchman stayed inside the removed pilothouse and boiled his coffee there. But he also had been the *Oakland's* chief engineer.

What first got us talking was the oyster shells clinging to the ancient anchors lying high and dry.

“Were those oysters real?”

“Guess so,” he answered. “Those hooks have been down a long while.” His words carried the accent of Edinburgh and cannot be spelled the way he pronounced them.

The story of the dredger, as he told it, was most of the story of the harbor’s development for the navy, the dredger having dredged the fill for the marine base, the destroyer base, the North Island job, and so on. She was the first suction dredger on the Pacific Coast.

“And I bet she’s found a lot of old things like——”

“Yes, like Spanish anchors,” he said. “Lots of them.”

“And like——”

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"Oh, sure," he interrupted. "We once found some old lead bullets. The damnedest things. Made by hand. And when we were over dredging for the Tent City across the bay we found money. Modern money. Must have been tossed over for the kids to dive for. It used to get caught in the couplings."

"And I bet you've found——"

"Yes, once we found a five-dollar gold piece. That was quite a day."

"Cannon balls." It was my turn. "That's what I'm after. Cannon balls."

"Cannon balls?" he asked, puzzled. "Now say, you'll have to ask the superintendent about that. You'll have to ask him when he comes, for I don't remember no cannon balls. I really—now—don't remember no cannon balls."

Close to the *Oakland*—so close that we could have hit her with one of the rusty bolts at our feet—was the dredger *Frank M. Shallue*, working on a turning basin for the new aircraft carriers.

This powerful dredger seemed to have deliberately moved in to work beside the *Oakland* merely to show the old *Oakland* what had happened to dredgers during the intervening fifty-two years.

The *Frank M. Shallue* was electric-driven with 2,000 horsepower, and the *Oakland* originally had been steam-driven with 700 horsepower. The Scotsman pointed to the *Frank M. Shallue*, and I was hoping he was going to say that cannon balls had been found over there. There

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was nothing to do but wait while he pointed, but finally he let his hand drop and said nothing.

“How about it? Any over there?”

“It goes to show, doesn’t it?” he said. “It goes to show how a dredger, to be anything now, must be so she can pump mud at least a mile and a half. Doesn’t it go to show now?” He intimated that the *Oakland’s* limit had been only a half-mile.

“I might go over to her. I might find what I’m after over there.”

“Naw,” he begged, “if I were you I wouldn’t go over to her. Naw, if I were you I wouldn’t go over to her at all.”

“But I’ve got to find out about old cannon balls.”

“You wait till the superintendent comes. He’s got time books dating back to 1892. You wait till he comes. I wouldn’t go bothering myself with the *Frank M. Shallue*. Not with her—over there. You wait here, and I’ll tell you about that five-dollar gold piece. It was quite a day, I tell you—”

But I departed for the new dredge regardless, leaving the veteran engineer standing there among the dismantled and rusty remnants of what had been his *Oakland*. I turned to wave at him. He attempted to wave back, but stopped, then made his way slowly back into the cover of the removed pilothouse on the pier.

So for the moment the quest for old cannon balls hardly seemed worth it. For his face remained at the window.



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But aboard the new *Frank M. Shallue*, after reaching her deck from a shore boat, everything was lively and busy. Her superintendent said excitedly that her drill bored into the mudbank thirty-two feet and more below water, and a suction pump did the rest. And that the dredger, the most modern on the Pacific (this was some ten years ago, remember), had turned out 1,066,600 cubic yards of dirt so far at a cost of nineteen cents per cubic yard, and that . . .

“Any old cannon balls?”

“No,” he said. “But now let me show you photographs of plans for a larger one to cost a million dollars. The present one cost half that. I’ll get the photographs. You see, this mud isn’t touched by human hand, but goes the mile and a half to building Lindbergh Field. The new dredger, though, the one that ’ll cost a million—”

“Then there’s never been any cannon balls?”

“Just what do you mean by that? I don’t quite understand just what you mean by that.”

“I mean any old cannon balls. Ever find them?”

“No!”

“Oh.” And it has always been like that.

Of course, Hippolyte de Bouchard might have aided in today’s quest had he entered the port as he had said he would do. For the red-hot cannon balls kept ready and waiting for him did appear spectacular glowing among the flames—although no soldiers could be found in San Diego at the time who knew how to load them and fire them in

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such a condition. They were more spectacular than reassuring, inasmuch as the women and youngsters of the colony were sent into the back country for safety.

Nor were the fearful stories reaching San Diego about Bouchard built on fancy.

Though a Frenchman, he was associated in some manner with the Buenos Aires navy. On his cruise down the coast with his two vessels, *Argentina* and *Santa Rosa*, he had sacked Monterey and burned it. He did the same to the village of Refugio near Santa Barbara. He next anchored at Santa Barbara itself and scared everybody there. He then moved south to San Juan Capistrano and pillaged the place.

San Diego was scheduled next. The year was 1818.

Thirty men from San Diego had been dispatched to San Juan Capistrano to aid if possible in the defense of the mission there. And one of these thirty, Santiago Arguello, the officer in charge, almost contributed to the world an undying epigram.

This was when Bouchard sent a message ashore at San Juan Capistrano stating that if an immediate supply of provisions were given him he would spare the village. The suggestion was answered by Arguello (our man) that Bouchard might land if he pleased and would be given "an immediate supply of powder and shot."

Such an epigrammatic answer deserved to be inscribed in stone, no doubt, for all to see and honor. But the answer had one flaw: Bouchard did land. And with Bouchard's

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landing, Arguello (our man) departed for the hills with his thirty San Diego soldiers.

Furthermore, there was nothing for it but for them to stay in the hills until the big mob from off the Pacific had helped itself to whatever it wanted in the mission village. Especially did the mob help itself to the padres' liquor supply inside the storehouse.

What could not be moved, eaten, swallowed, gulped or worn was burned. Bouchard's mighty crew of 366 men was a swaggering sight of many costumes when it took to sea again next morning San Diego-bound. Filipinos teetered about the decks arrayed in the abandoned clothing of California lancers. Two little Malays tripped themselves within their newly acquired priest robes. Bouchard alone remained sober.

But why he ignored San Diego, his heart's dream as a finale, is one of those secrets which must have been decided outside the port. His failure to enter is one more reason, perhaps, why the bottom of the harbor remains so annoyingly free of cannon balls despite the cannons all around.

But the reason he attacked the coast line of California is not a secret. Yet like everything else concerned with California's shore-line story, the big undertakings with a fanfare of purposes behind them generally petered flat while other things, as if by accident, grew into being the coast line's real history.

So it was with Hippolyte de Bouchard. He was out to make history, out to make California an independent

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country, independent of Spain and of Mexico. But instead of making history he made a cruel clown of himself.

Bouchard considered himself, or pretended to consider himself, a patriot of independence. Instead, he now is remembered along the shore line as a pirate.

His era was the era of revolutions. The countries of South America during 1818 were fast becoming republics. So was Mexico. But the few people of California, fearful only of England and Russia, continued to dream on, unmindful of all the fireworks elsewhere except when they interfered with local commerce and the obtaining of supplies from Mexico.

Vessels flying the Spanish flag were having difficulty getting anywhere on the Pacific during this time. It was open season on them. Piracy is not too unreasonable a word. The English captains were seizing whatever Spanish vessels they sighted. So were the Russians. So were the vessels of the new South American republics. So were American skippers. In fact, especially were American skippers.

Spain was the victim for all hands, and most of the American vessels for this new game were outfitted in Baltimore, then sailed to Buenos Aires laden with ammunition. What these vessels did from then on, sometimes under the Buenos Aires flag and sometimes under the American, is a brief annal usually skipped in our schoolbooks, the same as Yankee otter poaching.

On the Pacific during this period the term "Baltimore

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ship" could mean anything from outright pirate to South American patriot. Such was the *Santa Rosa* of the Bouchard expedition. She was originally an American-built ship, a Baltimore-built ship. On reaching the Rio de la Plata she was outfitted as a privateer under the erstwhile command of an Englishman, Peter Corney. As rapidly as she captured a vessel the "Baltimore ship" would have her name changed, so that at various times her name was *Liberty*, *Baca*, *Checka* and finally *Santa Rosa*.

One day the *Santa Rosa*, heavy with plunder, put into the Hawaiian Islands. Peter Corney wanted to sell the vessel, goods and all, outright to King Kamehameha. But the Englishman seemed too anxious. The ruler of the islands was suspicious. He confined the crew ashore and held the vessel.

That was when the stories about the *Santa Rosa*, alias *Checka*, alias *Baca*, alias *Liberty*, began to catch up with her. Her crew had sacked towns of any nation, had seized vessels of almost any flag, had undergone mutinies. Indeed, her reputation was such that the Argentine Republic itself wanted the vessel captured and brought back under control.

This is where we first meet Captain Hippolyte de Bouchard. He sailed his frigate, the *Argentina*, to the Hawaiian Islands to reclaim the *Santa Rosa*. King Kamehameha was willing, even more than willing. Peter Corney was released from confinement. Instead of punishing Corney, Bouchard made friends with him.

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The Englishman must have been a good talker, for Bouchard returned the command of the *Santa Rosa* to Peter Corney. And the two vessels struck out for the California coast "to free the people there from the Spanish yoke."

But the people there did not care to be freed from "the Spanish yoke." At least, not right then. Nor had they given much thought to the matter at any time. Not even after their headquarters, Mexico, became a republic. The whole thing was something which naturally sneaked up on them, and there was nothing they could do about it, or really tried to do about it—this independence from Spain.

Yet as for Bouchard, whether he was pirate or patriot or crazy, or all three, his cosmopolitan gang of 366 men has left a permanent mark on the coast. The crews of his two vessels were composed of Philippine Islanders, Malays, Spaniards, Americans, Spanish-Americans, some Englishmen, Negroes, and at least thirty Kanakas from the Hawaiian Islands.

Because of this mob years were to pass before the villages of the California coast were put back into place. Those that were burned had to be rebuilt, of course. But that was not all. Californians accused other Californians of having acted as double-crossing spies for Bouchard, and the respective families refrained ever after from speaking to one another.

Nor was that all.

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The padres of San Juan Capistrano charged Arguello, the officer from San Diego, with having wasted their wine and brandy while trying to lug some of it to safety prior to the pillaging. And then of having wasted more while having it returned. The padres' main evidence consisted of two of the Indians who had aided in the hurried lugging. One of these Indians had gone insane from liquor, and the other had drunk himself to death.

Yet of all the Californians who, as time went on, grew most to regret Bouchard's visit was Juan Molina, the town drunk of Monterey.

While the town was being rushed, sacked and burned, poor Molina did not flee with the other villagers. Drunk as usual, he hung around town to watch the excitement and to ask what the visitors were doing. They shut him up finally by making him a prisoner of war, and as such he was listed when taken aboard the *Argentina*.

This might have been all right for Molina except that at the next stop made by Bouchard, the stop at Refugio, three of Bouchard's own men were lassoed by a party of Californians. These Californians were led by Sergeant Carlos Antonio Carillo. They had ridden up from Santa Barbara and had ambushed a Bouchard landing party.

The three of Bouchard's men who were lassoed and captured included Lieutenant William Taylor, a Bostonian.

Later, while Bouchard was anchored at Santa Barbara

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and threatening the village, an agreement was made with the village's defender, José de la Guerra, for an exchange of prisoners.

The Californians had the three Bouchard men and presumed that Bouchard must have at least an equal number of Californians. The Californians delivered their three Bouchard captives, including the Bostonian, Lieutenant Taylor. But in exchange the Californians received only their town drunk back again, Juan Molina.

The shock caused the Spanish governor of California, Pablo Vicente de Sola, to go delirious with rage. He was an aristocrat with more grandeur than sense and had been the first to run in hiding from Bouchard. But now, with Bouchard's departure, the governor had returned from hiding.

The governer, in his rage, threatened court-martial for José de la Guerra for not having allowed himself to be killed by Bouchard. And next the governor threatened court-martial for José de la Guerra for having exchanged the three prisoners for Molina. And next the governor took it all out on Molina.

The governer sentenced Molina to six years on the chain gang and a hundred lashes. Just why, nobody knows.

As for Bouchard, he continued on down the coast after passing San Diego and finally put into Valparaiso. There Peter Corney, the Englishman, wanted his share of the prize booty. But Bouchard, the Frenchman, said no. And that is the last ever heard of them.



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And the last the Californians ever wanted to hear of them.

The red-hot cannon balls in readiness at San Diego were allowed to cool off. They are NOT in the bottom of the harbor.

**T**HOUGH THE FIRST American visitors to annoy San Diego came in 1798—five years after Vancouver's visit—the prize American overland visitor of all perhaps was James Ohio Pattie. He distinguished himself by setting an all-time record of hating everything and everybody associated with the harbor. Besides, most of his eight months' visit was spent inside the iron cage of the guard-house.

A natural harbor, being timeless, is too much like an endless conveyer belt to allow our becoming too enthralled by the importance of the happenings and personages of the bygone.

Yes, they were of the harbor yesterday, but others of equal stuff are of the harbor today, and there will be another turnover by tomorrow. The conveyer belt rolls on and on. But despite all this, a visitor like James Ohio

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Pattie cannot be repeated—ever—owing to the circumstances of the years of his coming.

He was not the first American to reach San Diego overland from the East, but he was the second by a matter of a couple of years. And he came at a time when the word “Bostonian” (as all Americans were called) had come to mean nothing but trouble. They asked for it—and usually got it.

The year of Pattie’s overland arrival was 1828, and the blunt little fellow made the transcontinental crossing while still in his teens.

Actually the first American visitors to tramp the mesquite-bordered paths of San Diego arrived from Lower California—two years ahead of the first American vessel to reach port. They had walked all the way from the Mexican peninsula and were three American sailors, John Stephens, William Katt and Barnaby Jan, all off the Boston ship *Gallant*—which for some reason had dropped them off upon the Lower California shore.

The three sailors were annoyed and they were hungry and they tramped northward up the coast to ask the comandante of San Diego for something to eat.

The comandante, in turn, was equally annoyed on seeing them. He put them to work digging trenches for the new fortifications until some vessel should arrive (God only knew when) to take the three foreigners away, and far away, and away forever.

The year was 1798.

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The *Betsy*, being the first Yankee vessel to visit San Diego, did not arrive until 1800, as previously mentioned, to be followed at lengthy intervals by the other Yankees: the *Enterprise*, the *Alexander*, and the *Lelia Byrd*.

The colony, as we know, would have preferred not to see any of them. And, following the escape and departure of the *Lelia Byrd*, the colony quite definitely decided not to see any more of them.

So when the next Yankee vessel, the *O'Cain*, entered port behind the *Lelia Byrd*, the *O'Cain's* captain was refused both provisions and water. The excuse given was that the captain had no passport. But he did have a Negro sailor, a John Brown, who swam ashore and stayed ashore until the *O'Cain* departed.

San Diego's excitement on viewing its first Negro was not sufficient, though, for the sailor to be kept there as a permanent oddity. As soon as the novelty slackened, the Negro, who was proving to be too much of an eater, was shipped to San Blas.

By this time the Yankee skippers, during their huddles off Mexico, were beginning to agree among themselves that maybe San Diego, after all, did not want them. Nor did the one or two other California ports want them.

The mix-up was all the more peculiar because almost everyone ashore possessed otter pelts and wanted to trade or sell them to the "Boston ships." But as this could not be done officially, go-betweens along the coast line opened a pelt-running business. The Yankee smugglers did not

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need to enter any of the ports, but merely sent their small boats to a designated beach. The pelts would be waiting.

Yet when the *Peacock*, Captain Kimball, tried the stunt off San Juan Capistrano, the four sailors of his landing party were captured. They were brought to the jail in San Diego. While in jail they received a note, smuggled through from the *Peacock*, saying that if they would escape on a certain day a boat from the *Peacock* would be waiting off the outer shore of Point Loma to receive them. The men broke out of the San Diego jail and hurried to Point Loma. But no *Peacock*. She was not there, nor her boat. The four American sailors waited all night and all next day, then had no other choice but to return to jail.

But an American captain the same year decided for the fun of it to rescue the four sailors. He was the Captain Joseph O'Cain of the *O'Cain* who previously had brought his vessel into San Diego and had been ordered out again without receiving provisions or water. The memory still annoyed him. So his decision to rescue the four Americans was not altogether philanthropical.

When off Mexico he anchored at Todos Santos supposedly for water. But the Spanish-Mexicans by this time were onto him. They detailed a guard of three soldiers to observe the movements of his landing party going for water. But the landing party kidnaped the guards and brought them aboard the Yankee vessel as prisoners.

Captain O'Cain then sent word to San Diego that he would exchange the three Spanish-Mexican soldiers for

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the four American sailors, and if the deal were refused he would bring his vessel into San Diego and blow up both the fort and the village.

The deal was refused, and San Diego immediately prepared for a bombardment. Once again, and for three days, the little colony had cause to shiver and wait and prepare its battery.

But, as in the case of Bouchard, nothing happened. The threat did not work. The Yankee skipper released his three prisoners and sailed away. The four American sailors in the San Diego jail were in turn shipped to San Blas, as had been done with the Negro.

All these incidents when jumbled together may help show the attitude with which Americans generally were regarded on the California coast by the time that wild youngster, James Ohio Pattie, walked into San Diego overland from St Louis.

He and his small party missed out by two years being the first Americans to have made the great crossing from the East to California. For, two years previous, into San Diego had walked the original transcontinental walker of them all, Jedediah S. Smith. And he, too, had been placed instantly into custody to give an accounting of himself to Governor Echeandía. This governor of the Mexican province, his headquarters in San Diego, apparently had a phobia for assuming that all Americans were Spanish spies, and as such they were jailed or held until they had

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proved themselves innocent. Or until the governor grew sick of seeing them around.

And like James Ohio Pattie, Jedediah S. Smith, in his diary, shows no fond recollections for his treatment in San Diego. But, unlike Pattie, Smith was an out-and-out honest fellow and not given to enlarging his own heroics. One can believe him sincerely. But Pattie's journal is so obviously filled with the good old blarney that the reading at times becomes more amusing than informational.

Yet, for all of that, Pattie's exploit of crossing from St Louis to San Diego, and from California to Mexico City by boat and foot, then over to Vera Cruz, and by ship back to the United States—in the years between 1824 and 1830—all this does tally up into something for any youngster. Pattie was only fifteen the day he started out from the East with his father and party.

The party dwindled as the going became more wretched in the unexplored regions. Finally only he, his father and four other American trappers were left. And even they became lost somewhere close to what now must be the California-Arizona border. The locality is a guess, and it was a guess with them, their horses having been stolen by Indians. The men and the boy reached another tribe and made friends.

And:

. . . when the smoking was finished we began to inquire of them by signs, how far we were from the Spanish settle-

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ment [San Diego]? This we effected by drawing an image of a cow and sheep in the sand and then imitating the noise of each kind of domestic animals, that we supposed the Spaniards would have. They appeared to understand us, for they pointed west, and then at our clothes, and then at our naked skins. From this we inferred that they wished to say that farther to the west lived white people, as we were. And this was all we could draw from them on the subject.

We then asked them, if they had ever seen white people before. This we effected by stretching open our eyes with our fingers, and pointing to them, and then looking vehemently in that direction, while we pointed west our own fingers. They shook their heads in the negative. Then stretching their own ears, as we had our eyes, striking themselves on the breast, and pointing down the river, they pronounced the word "wechapa." This we afterwards understood implied, that their chief lived lower down the river, and that they had heard from him, that he had seen these people. . . .

Encouraged by this information, the party continued dragging its way towards the settlement of San Diego. When Pattie limits his *Personal Narrative* (originally published in 1831) to descriptions of Indians and trapping, one hardly could ask for more in the way of information and honest background. But something seemed to happen to the youth each time he later contacted a Spanish-Mexican official, and he would rise to flames of elegant fury.

The transcontinental journey took so many years that he must have been close to nineteen by the time he, his father and the four other Americans finally reached San Diego—promptly to be arrested. The intervening years of



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tramping not only had added dust and a beard to him, but also the appearance of somebody twice his age.

In fairness to the blatant inaccuracies in his California portion of the journal it must be said too that they were drawn from memory afterwards and not from notes. Also his journal was edited, if not actually ghost-written, by a preacher, the Reverend Timothy Flint. He should be credited with having preserved the experiences of the young cross-country traveler, but at the same time perhaps should be credited also with aiding (or at least not discouraging) the more tumultuous passages of heroic grandiloquence. Especially when aimed at priests.

In the journal, for instance, is a California scene in which a friar is about to grant Pattie, for favors received, a thousand head of cattle, five hundred mules, and the land for pasturing them, if Pattie would consent to be a Catholic. The friar's promise was in writing.

Pattie's recorded response, though, should not have annoyed any Protestant preacher editing the copy:

When I read this [the priest's proposal], without making use of any figure of speech, I was struck dumb. My anger choked me. As I was well aware of the fact, that this man had it in his power to hang me if I insulted him, and that here there was no law to give me redress, and compel him to pay me justly for my services, I said nothing for some time, but stood looking him full in the face.

I cannot judge whether he read my displeasure, and burning feelings in my countenance, as I thus eyed him, and would have sought to pacify me, or not; but before I made a move-

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ment of any kind, he spoke, saying, "You look displeased, sir."

Prudential considerations were sufficient to withhold me no longer, and I answered in a short manner, that I felt at that moment as though I should rejoice to find myself once more in a country where I should be justly dealt by. He asked me, what I meant when I spoke of being justly dealt by? I told him what my meaning was, and wished to be in my own country where there are laws to compel a man to pay another what he justly owes him, without his having the power to attach to the debt, as a condition upon which the payment is to depend, the submission to, and gratification of, any of his whimsical desires.

Upon this the priest's tone became loud and angry and he said, "Then you regard my proposing that you should become a Catholic, as the expression of an unjust and whimsical desire!" I told him, yes, that I did; and that I would not change my present opinions for all the money his mission was worth; and moreover, that before I would consent to be adopted into the society and companionship of such a band of murderers and robbers, as I deemed were to be found along this coast, for the pitiful amount of one thousand head of cattle, I would suffer death!

For a youngster who could have received little schooling, if any, before going into the wilds as a trapper, young Pattie, we must concede, struck a miraculous fluency of words on reaching the harbor. His vocabulary, as the narrative rumbles along, increases in volume and tempo. So, assuming that the actual writing is not the work of the Reverend Timothy Flint, one almost could say that James Ohio Pattie was not only one of the earliest overland

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visitors to reach San Diego from the East but also was the first of the everlasting school to soar with literary wings the moment he struck California.

Yet Pattie did have a story—a story which has caused no end of arguments to this day relative to whether or not the early San Diego treated him as mercilessly as he claimed. His aged father, Sylvester Pattie, died in San Diego and was buried there. But, according to the son, each was compelled to occupy a separate cell. The son claimed to have been prohibited from seeing the father even while he was dying. James, though, was permitted to attend the burial under escort of six soldiers, and also in company with a young lady who was befriending him.

The young lady is described by Pattie as being the sister of a sergeant. But her actual name is confusing, being either "Miss Peaks," as Pattie spells it in the narrative, or "Miss Pico," as would seem more likely. She remained his guardian angel throughout, bringing him food, information, clothing and kindness.

Also, from his own manuscript, she seems the only Spanish-Mexican he did not double-cross during his stay.

His gun was kept in custody by a lieutenant under orders of the governor. Pattie asked the lieutenant for permission to borrow the gun for cleaning. The lieutenant said he dare not do this, as the disobedience would bring punishment and demotion. But Pattie, having made friends with the officer, continued begging for the gun until

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finally the officer agreed, provided the loan be kept secret and the gun immediately returned after being cleaned. Pattie, though, hid the gun in some brush and would not return it. The lieutenant was court-martialed.

Yet Pattie continued to wonder why nobody trusted him.

Despite his hardships, Pattie seems everlastingly to have been in personal conversation with the governor, and spent most of these conversations retailing opinions about the governor to the governor.

Before reaching San Diego, Pattie and his party had cached some furs near a river beyond the mountains. As a ruse to escape, he asked permission to go there and recover the furs. The governor agreed to furnish the pack mules for a share of the furs, but for security insisted on two soldiers going along. This was all right with Pattie. He and his companions, according to the journal, worked out a scheme by which they would seize the soldiers and "flay them alive just to show that Americans knew how to torture too."

The governor must have heard of the scheme, for he proposed that Pattie remain in San Diego as hostage during the trip. This "deceitful proposal" of the governor's caused Pattie's vocabulary to reach new glories of hate. But the show-down came, according to Pattie, when the governor became worried about a smallpox epidemic threatening north of San Diego. Then Pattie remembered some vaccine among his belongings (these belongings were all supposed

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to have been stolen or destroyed at the outset), and Pattie agreed to vaccinate everybody—except the governor.

An agreement was reached whereby Pattie would receive his liberty if he would vaccinate everybody not only in San Diego but on the coast. As a consequence he reports in his narrative that the number of vaccinations performed by him single-handed between San Diego and San Francisco numbered twenty-two thousand. Then, boarding a vessel, he left the country, ultimately reaching Mexico City overland, and then went overland to Vera Cruz, then by vessel to Boston.

But his journal, the first American description of the Mexican province of California to reach the American public, had a bigger effect than he or even the Reverend Timothy Flint could have expected. The book was read throughout the East, and read widely, so that Americans for the first time became interested in the strange land so far away. They began thinking of it. Then they began heading for it overland. For until this time the California shore had been visited (except for Jedediah Smith) only by American skippers and sailors.

Paralleling Pattie's own distasteful sojourn in San Diego, another blow-off had occurred with an American vessel which had arrived in port to trade and, no doubt, smuggle. She was the *Franklin*, Captain John Bradshaw. The governor at San Diego had cause to suspect the type of cargo aboard the *Franklin*, and had ordered the vessel searched and the contraband, if any, removed to shore.

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Captain Bradshaw agreed to these orders, but before they could be carried out he cut cable, hoisted sail, and made a bolt for the sea. His attempt to escape was greeted with fire from the fort, two of the balls puncturing the *Franklin's* hull, two others damaging the rigging. But he continued on, without firing back, and got away.

Pattie claims to have aided Captain Bradshaw in the escape by relaying an overheard conversation between the governor and a Spanish officer. But this part of the incident is indefinite, nor does it matter.

Yet out of all this we rather do comprehend the desperation of the Spanish-Mexican officials to keep their coast exclusively their own. And Pattie's journal—later—did not help.

This feature of wanting no dealings whatsoever with outside craft continued to be incomprehensible to the Americans, the English, the Russians. And incomprehensible, also, to most of the colonists who were not top officials. These lesser colonists remained through the years only too anxious to trade with outsiders, and aided the smugglers more than hindered them.

They certainly aided John Lawlor of the brig *Karimoko*, an American vessel disguised under Hawaiian registry. He entered the port of San Diego during the time of Pattie's presence. The *Karimoko* was seized and searched. But her sails were first removed under orders of the governor, so that John Lawlor could not duplicate the trick

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of the *Franklin*. Yet Lawlor, being smart, had hidden most of his goods on Santa Catalina Island, the familiar hangout for most American smugglers.

Prior to being summoned for a hearing before the governor, John Lawlor paid a colonist, Domingo Carillo, for Spanish lessons. These were for the purpose of impressing the governor, and we are left with the complete report of the hearing:

“Buenos días, Señor General; mi guiro to voy to the misions y comprar y grease con goods; please me dar permission. Si quieres, quieres; y si no, dejalo. Adiós, Señor General.”

Another otter smuggler with whom Pattie made friends while in San Diego was Charles Lang, an American who operated the *Alabama*, likewise under Hawaiian registry. He was caught operating near Todos Santos. With him were two sailors and two Kanakas. All of them were brought to San Diego for a hearing. Because their goods included a barrel organ and two trunks of dry goods (typical trade articles), the goods were confiscated and sold. The case ultimately went to Mexico City, then to the judge in Guaymas, but in the end Charles Lang lost out. This especially infuriated Pattie, for he had decided to join Lang in the otter-smuggling business.

Obviously these few Americans, once they got together in conversation, must have filled the air with everything except platitudes concerning the officials, especially one official, Governor General Echeandía. And he, perplexed

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man, had learned to despise the Americans just as much for always outricking him.

As, for example, when some of them even had the audacity to hoist a makeshift American flag on the beach of Point Loma—the Point which housed the fort.

But the Americans who did this were not smugglers. They were two lonely Americans, James P. Arthur and George W. Greene, who had been left ashore all season to cure hides while waiting the return of their hide vessel. The longer they waited the more homesick they became for sight of other Americans. Each time they saw a passing vessel, the two would hoist their little flag in hope that the vessel, if American, would see the flag and enter port.

To make the flag—the first American flag ashore in San Diego, and maybe in California—Greene furnished his calico shirt, which was blue. Arthur furnished the red from his underwear.

The year was still approximately 1828, or about six years after Mexico had won her independence from Spain. But this change, as we know, brought to California more confusion than enthusiasm. Nobody really cared except the padres. Their missions were robbed by the Mexican politicians coming from below.

And so Pattie, the kid trapper, certainly had arrived during an ugly time.



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## 13

**P**OINT LOMA, much of it being a government reservation for Fort Rosecrans, is still a brush-covered wilderness of a sort at one end, and its wild canyons bear even today such semiforgotten names as Robber's Cave, Smuggler's Canyon, Chicken Ranch Canyon, and Owl Roost—all a hangover from the days of the long-haired cholos.

Shiploads of these unwanted arrivals, recruited out of Mexican prisons mostly, can be said to be Mexico's one big gesture towards California after Mexico won her independence from Spain.

The presence of these newcomers turned San Diego into a lively little hell of uncertainty. Stringy-haired women were with them too, nor were the holy padres of San Diego the only ones who were shocked into crossing themselves at the language they heard, at the claw-to-claw fights they

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saw, and at the unsanctified wooing amidst chaparral and on the beach.

Nobody in San Diego, where most of the shiploads arrived, thanked the mother country of Mexico for her unexpected generosity.

But the actual announcement of Mexico's independence from Spain (April 1822) had caused even less stir in San Diego than elsewhere in California. Besides, the official affirmation of the news was not received in San Diego until about a year after, and then was received with a yawn. Nobody really cared—at the time—the province of California having been more or less Mexico's and Spain's forgotten land these many years.

Yet the ambitious guardian angel which already seemed to have been looking out for the United States, taking her in tow in preference to other countries, continued on hand during the new California setup. At least it would look that way. For, with Mexico's independence, California became the biblical house divided against itself, and even a boy with a five-cent whistle could have blown her over.

For a fact, the only interest the officials coming up from Mexico seemed to have in California was the prospect of looting it, a procedure which they immediately adopted and gladly.

New governors went into office so fast in California and went out so fast that even a fiend for research would have a hard time today to make a list of them or even to

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count them. The most conservative estimate has the number between twelve and fifteen within a dozen years. Nor could anybody at the time be sure just who was governor and who was not, they changed so rapidly.

Also, at various times California had two governors, one serving in the north around Monterey and another in the south around San Diego, each governor claiming to be California's one and only.

Yet on one question alone were the officials from Mexico in agreement: the closing in on the missions, the one sure source of ready-made booty. The padres were told they no longer had authority, and if they did not like the new law they could get out. Some of them did get out, but not all of them. A number of them remained, hoping against hope that their generation of pioneering would not be completely exploited and exploded. Too, a few wished to remain as a gesture towards their neophytes, who were more lost than ever over the strange mix-up occurring around them.

California, or at least that part of it which is now southern California, might today still be a part of Mexico (or an independent republic of its own) had not the Mexican-Californians of the era turned the whole new country into a free-for-all dogfight among themselves.

The few Mexican soldiers in California were as scattered as ever, and as tattered as ever. Even more so. For the new governors assigned to California from Mexico had the frequent habit of bringing skeleton battalions with

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them for the momentary support of each new governor's claims. These battalions on their arrival in San Diego were something to see and also something to avoid. The battalions were composed of all breeds, and their previous homes had been the jails of Guaymas and San Blas. The name given them, "cholos," still retains in San Diego an unhappy meaning.

They knew no discipline and as soon as possible would make a break on their own, finding protection among their own gangs in the canyons and caves and brush. Many of them later were to become the bad boys of legend who roamed the more northern sections of California, robbing coaches, killing settlers, torturing miners, straight on through into the American occupancy and the Gold Rush.

These official Mexican donations, disembarking in San Diego, included such face cards in latter-day banditry as Francisco Badillo, one of those who preferred to be sent to California rather than be executed for murder in Mexico. He is the one who, after starting a monte bank of his own, was found one day concealed under his own table cautiously reaching up to steal his own money. When asked what was the idea, he said he was merely trying to keep in practice.

Some children were born to him and his mistress, but in time he became such a cattle thief that he and one of his sons were lynched. This is when his little granddaughter cried, saying that the lazy Americans had allowed Grandpa to die when a little earth, if piled under his feet,

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would have saved him. Another son of his was the familiar Six-Toed Pete who, rather than stand around to receive condolences about Father, escaped the same day across the border.

But California had to be colonized, according to the officials down in Mexico, even if all the jails of the peninsula and of the mainland had to be emptied for the purpose. All a Mexican had to do to get to California was to say he wanted to go there, and he would be promised a year's rations and a year's pay.

Yet the takers remained so comparatively few that finally convicted murderers, like Francisco Badillo, were given their choice of going to California or accepting their penalty. True, some were political prisoners, and some were innocent of the charges against them, and some turned out later to be fair citizens in California.

The old-time Californians thought for a while that they had a solution in making a convict settlement out of one of their islands, Santa Cruz. More than fifty of the most hopeless in San Diego and elsewhere were transshipped across the channel to this island along with a supply of fishhooks and cattle, then left there to do the best they could. But four of them one night became playful with fire. The fire spread, destroying their belongings and huts. So the group built rafts and returned to the mainland—the experiment ended.

Of course, not all the expeditions of colonists and would-be colonists arriving in San Diego for distribution over

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the country were composed of cholos and ex-convicts. In fact, the most ambitious expedition was that of José María Hajar, a smart promoter. He was the original San Diego salesman of the heaven-on-earth idea. In talking up his prospects to customers in Mexico, he made the plans doubly beautiful by promising his customers that on their arrival in California the missions would be given them, and also the neophyte-laborers. His customers would have nothing to do from then on but sit in the sun and be waited on by Indian slaves.

He actually closed a deal with the Mexican government whereby the government promised each of Hajar's customers a monthly wage in addition to giving them seed, implements and stock—all to be taken free from the missions.

But, to cap it all, Hajar then went one better. While still in Mexico he succeeded in receiving the appointment of governor of California and "administrator of the missions." He could not have asked for more or have received more. The result was that his Mexican takers totaled more than two hundred.

Part of his expedition of colonists arrived in San Diego aboard the *Natalia*. The name is given because the vessel is said to have been the one on which Napoleon escaped from Elba in 1815. A French captain, on visiting San Diego at the time of the vessel's arrival, is said to have recognized it as such. But whether true or not, or whatever it is worth, the story has been classified as gospel on the waterfront.

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But what definitely is true is that Hajar's coming resulted in one of the greatest horseback rides in history.

Between the time of Hajar's departure by sea from Mexico and his arrival in California, an overnight change of presidents had occurred in the Mexican capital. The new president did not regard with favor the appointment of Hajar as governor-director of California to relieve Governor Figueroa, who had proved himself to be the one sincerely hard-working governor of the whole relay of California governors.

The new president of Mexico was so hostile about the idea of having Governor Figueroa relieved in preference to the promoter Hajar that the president dispatched a lone rider, Rafael Amador, to gallop from Mexico City to California in time to head off the change. If the rider were successful his reward would be three thousand dollars.

Amador was captured by Indians of the Colorado who tried to kill him. He escaped. His horse was killed. He built a raft, crossed the river, lost all his clothes in so doing, was three days on the desert without water, obtained another horse somehow—and reached Monterey within forty-eight days after having left Mexico City.

He reached Governor Figueroa ahead of Hajar, and the transfer of governorship did not occur. We can imagine that Hajar and his colonists were provoked by the news. For meanwhile they had been tramping up the coast from San Diego towards Monterey telling all the Indians along the way that at last a deliverer had come to rescue them

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“from their chains.” What the new colonists meant by this, nobody knows.

While not literally correct, one might almost say that California never was under Mexico’s rule. Mexico only tried to rule. Actually she looted instead.

When California was part of Spain, the soldiers occasionally received some pay and some provisions from His Royal Majesty of Spain. Not much, but some. But now, under Mexico, the soldiers received nothing at all. Their orders were to procure what they needed from the missions. The missions in turn were taxed. The padres in turn were without authority to conduct their business so that these taxes could be raised. The soldiers were too lazy to work, the officials were too busy fighting one another—so as usual the aborigines were compelled to labor for everyone once again.

What food was obtainable the Indians raised, only to have it taken from them. When some of them rebelled at this idea, the soldiers quickly classified the complaint as “another threatened massacre,” the same as in the old days. Once again it was open season on the Indians. Three separate units of soldiery marched in as many directions out of San Diego and San Juan Capistrano to flog and to shoot. A raid on one village alone netted twenty-seven Indians killed.

The soldiers whipped the survivors of the villages back to work. But not all the survivors. Some escaped to the hills, never to return. They chose to stay up there and



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steal sheep and horses and be called "bandits" instead of neophytes.

The natives' turning point in mortality had long been reached and passed. Even inside the missions the deaths far exceeded the births. Those who had deserted from supervised labor, those who had taken to the hills, now found themselves unfit for the old life of their own. They sickened and died. They starved and died. They stole and were shot. The padres, on whom the Indians had been taught to depend for legal support against the military, were now as helpless as the Indians. All was over for the natives except for a few lingering death gurgles of defiance later on—much later on.

But to get back to the cholos, one of them did all right by himself for a time. He was Joaquín Solís, who had been convicted of murder in Mexico, yet had aided to such an extent in the Mexican War of Independence that his life was spared on the condition that he leave for California.

Solís not only left for California, and not only arrived in California, but soon enough he succeeded in organizing among the soldiers the first serious revolt against a current governor—the governor of the moment being Echeandía, headquarters in San Diego.

Solís had gone north, and there he assumed the position of comandante general of the California troops. And it was up to Governor General Echeandía, in the south, to do something about it. The result was one more of those frequent California campaigns wherein unpaid soldiers

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marched and countermarched against other unpaid soldiers, and with everybody shooting and nobody getting hit, and when the offer of a cigar was enough inducement for a soldier to desert and change sides.

The whole affair was as pointless as the subsequent ones which made California wide open for any outside nation to come in and take it. The few soldiers scattered here and there were so down on their luck that they would listen to any ambitious Mexican with a promise. In San Diego, for example, we are left with the official files which say that "Lieutenant Salazar cannot go to Monterey [to take part in the campaign] for want of a shirt and jacket. He has only a poor cloak to cover the frightful condition of his trousers."

The civil-war meeting between the San Diego soldiers under Echeandía and the northern soldiers under Solis of Monterey occurred near Santa Barbara.

Solis assumed the initiative of the battle by declaring that his men were "ready to fight and never would surrender until they got their pay." Saying this, he and his men immediately retreated.

General Echeandía, undaunted, retreated a few miles also. Then he fired his long-range remark that all would be forgiven and forgotten if Solis' soldiers joined his side.

The battle was over.

Solis and a few of his companions were given a free trip by boat back to Mexico, where presumably they lived

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happily ever afterwards. The province of California once again was saved—for the ultimate Forty-niners.

But the harbor of San Diego is indebted to Echeandía. During his alternating terms he made San Diego the capital, having it transferred from Monterey because San Diego, he officially said, was easier on his lumbago. Yet this idea of having San Diego the capital was what, as much as anything, repeatedly annoyed the northerners. The northerners got the capital back, but not because of the battle between the north and the south. They got it back because the district delegates to each province convention hated to walk or ride so far as San Diego each year and wade through “swollen streams in flood time.” For these political delegates, unlike the padres they had displaced, were amazingly foot-conscious.

**Y**ES, THEY COME IN and they go out, and that is a harbor. . . . Sometimes the wake they leave is a small wake, sometimes they leave no wake whatsoever. Sometimes the wake they leave gains momentum, turns itself into a regular choppy sea after they have gone. Or again the wake carves itself permanently into the bay's surface.

Though Richard Henry Dana's stay in San Diego, meaning almost his entire stay in California, was but a matter of months, he has come to personify the Hide-and-Tallow Age of the coast country. Nor did he so much as own a cow while there.

Each of the New England shipping companies in the hide trade had its own hide warehouse on the San Diego beach of what is now La Playa. No lumber being available

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in the immediate San Diego region, these houses were built in Boston, four of them, and the walls were quickly knocked together upon the beach itself.

These warehouses could not have been masterpieces of grandeur, although portions of them remained as relics in San Diego long after the great hide era had reached its zenith and disappeared, never to return. The bay of San Diego, being calm and landlocked, served as the final clearing grounds for the delicate task of transferring the hides and for the equally cautious task of loading them for the journey around the Horn to Boston. The loading could not be done in rough water, as one splash of spray upon one of the hides could have ruined, by the time Boston was reached, an entire cargo.

The hides shipped out of California during the hide-shipping era totaled between five million and eight million. Nobody can seem to agree on the exact figures. The tallow shipped from the heating vats during the same period is estimated to have been 250 million pounds. At the same time the Boston shippers could have for nothing all the horns the vessels could carry or load. Dana's vessel, for instance, returned to Boston with thirty thousand horns along with forty thousand hides. Truly a cargo, yet more or less a typical one.

As a sailor of the *Pilgrim*, Dana did his hide droghing on the beach of San Diego during the overlapping months of 1835-36.

But even today, more than a hundred years later, one

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can walk around on the same beach and point to where each hide warehouse had stood. Or, at least, guess. For, to repeat, little change has occurred in the contours of the land over there. The main change in the harbor, since Dana's time, has been the transfer of the river mouth from the harbor proper into False Bay. And the name of False Bay has been changed to Mission Bay, although "False Bay" is an accurate description.

(The change of the river mouth is mentioned, not to be technical, but to explain today's absence of that tide swamp which Dana, in his *Two Years Before the Mast*, was always crossing to reach the village of San Diego from the locality of the hide warehouses across the bay on Point Loma. This tide swamp has been filled in with harbor dredgings.)

The vicinity of the hide houses on Point Loma was a cosmopolitan center of all nationalities and all languages. Sailors from all the hide ships were landed there to live ashore while preparing hides for their respective vessels. The vessels, after leaving their crew of hide droghers ashore, would depart north to gather more hides along the coast, return with them, depart again and return, until enough were gathered in San Diego for the final loading for Boston.

When Dana was on the beach he listed the following nationalities among the hide droghers: two Englishmen, three Yankees, two Scotsmen, two Welshmen, one Irishman, three Frenchmen, one Dutchman, one Austrian, two or three Spaniards (from Old Spain), half a dozen Spanish-

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Americans and half-breeds, two Indians from Chile and the islands of Chiloé, one Negro, one mulatto, about twenty Italians, as many more Sandwich Islanders, one Tahitian, and one Kanaka from the Marquesas Islands.

By day this international group sweated over the hides, and by night they ganged together in one place to sing their various national songs, to drink, and to try if possible to hold conversations in the one community language, Spanish, of which all of them knew at least a few words.

So long as each accomplished his daily quota of handling twenty-five hides and provided his own firewood and cooking, no more work could be demanded of any of them. The rest of the evening was their own, and thus the sight of a woman meandering around the vicinity was greeted with "Sail ho!"

Sometimes these women came begging food, sometimes they just came. For, with the breakup of the mission dictatorship, morality among the now degraded Indians and half-breeds became as Dana tells it:

Indeed, to show the entire want of any sense of morality or domestic duty among them, I have frequently known an Indian to bring his wife, to whom he was lawfully married in the church, down to the beach, and carry her back again, dividing with her the money which she had got from the sailors.

Dana's real friends on Point Loma seem to have been the twenty Kanakas from the Hawaiian Islands who had been dumped off in San Diego to lug and cure and beat and scrape

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and dry hides the same as he was doing. He mentions each of these Kanakas by name. Though scarcely ever, if at all, does he mention the names of any of the Mexican officials, governors or generals who at the same time were still clamoring for their toe hold on posterity by double-crossing other Mexican officials, governors and generals in California. Who were the contemporary ones during the time of Dana's visit? And who cares? But if anyone does care, the answer to the names cannot be found in *Two Years Before the Mast*, required reading though it is in San Diego schools.

The twenty Kanakas on Point Loma had for their home an abandoned Russian oven. It had been built a few years previous by the crew of a Russian exploring vessel for baking bread. The Kanakas, having nowhere else to stay, moved in and made the huge oven their headquarters. They covered the black floor with Oahu mats for a carpet. They did their smoking, drinking, sleeping and discussing inside there, and the headquarters came to be known as the "Oahu Coffee House."

But Hawaiians were no novelty in San Diego. The Californians were more familiar with the Sandwich Islands than with Boston. The richer of the Californians sent their sons to Hawaii to be educated. And the only newspaper the Californians regularly received was an Hawaiian publication, the Honolulu *Polynesian*.

Though the Mexican officials of California never could get over the idea of discouraging foreign shipping,





*From very old photographs of California Indians*

## A YOUNG MAN



## A CLUSTER OF HUTS

Before reservations were established by our government, Indians got on as best they could in these miserable rancherias.



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Hawaiian vessels never were considered quite as such. This accounted for so many of the American vessels, in an attempt to escape the cutthroat revenue-duty charges for foreigners, sailing under Hawaiian registry and the Hawaiian emblem.

Also, there for a time the port of San Diego was the only one on the California coast allowed open to foreign bottoms at all, Hawaiian or otherwise. The shipping taxes demanded by the officials for their own private pockets accounted in part for the trick of the American skippers of laying off some California island and having one vessel, preferably under Hawaiian registry, bring the cargoes out to them. The game endured throughout California's Mexican rule.

Hides, though, were something which could not be transferred from vessel to vessel at sea. The storing of forty thousand hides aboard ship required a remarkably calm bay to prevent the disastrous splashing of salt water.

To make room for the thousands of hides and the thousands of cattle horns, the vessels in San Diego would be stripped of everything except the most essential equipment. All else was thrown overboard, and a slow fire of charcoal, birch bark and brimstone was started below decks. The hatches and every open seam, and also the cracks over the windows and the slides of the scuttles and companionway, were calked. Wherever smoke was seen coming out, the leak was calked and pasted, the ships being made smoketight. The seepage of any salt water could ruin a fortune.

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Dana tells this.

He also tells how the hides ashore were carried to the boat for transfer to the vessel, the hides being carried—on our heads from fear of their getting wet. We each had a piece of sheepskin sewed into the inside of our hats, with the wool next our heads, and thus were able to bear the weight, day after day, which might otherwise have worn off our hair, and borne hard upon our skulls.

Many a sailor dispute raged in the harbor over whether the hides should be stowed “shingling” or “back-to-back and flipper-to-flipper.” But Dana’s crew compromised by using part of each method, although there ever remained—  
an entire and bitter division of sentiment among the savants . . . some siding with Old Bill in favor of the former, and others scouting him and relying upon English Bob of the *Ayacucho*, who had been eight years in California, and was willing to risk his life and limb for the latter method.

When these hide ships were filled to within four feet of their beams, the complicated process of steoving began—  
by which a hundred hides are got into a place where scarce one could be forced by hand, and which presses the hides to the utmost, sometimes starting the beams of the ship . . . resembling in its effects the jack-screws which are used in stowing cotton.

The process required the use of tackles, toggles, falls and straps, with the whole crew pulling upon the lines in step with sailor chants.

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We found a great difference in the effect of the various songs in driving in the hides. Two or three songs would be tried, one after the other, with no effect—not an inch could be got upon the tackles: when a new song, struck up, seemed to hit the humor of the moment, and drove the tackles “two-blocks” at once. “Heave round hearty!” “Captain gone ashore!” “Dandy ship and a dandy crew,” and the like, might do for common pulls, but in an emergency, when we wanted a heavy, “raise-to-the-dead pull,” which should start the beams of the ship, there was nothing like “Time for us to go!” “Round the corner,” “Tally high ho! you know,” or “Hur-ray! Hurray! my hearty bullies!”

Thus, year after year were the California hide ships loaded in San Diego for their long cruises back around that same old Horn where a gale howls but once a year, and this “between the first day of January and the last day of December.”

We may wonder how the cattle on the California range could have multiplied so rapidly as that, and why the shipload after shipload of hides seemed inexhaustible. But multiply they did, their numbers never being decimated by blizzard or storm. Fences remained unknown, and the only enemy of stock was its own numbers, its own owners, and finally the Great Drought.

Range horses became so abundant that the ranchers, to save their grazing lands for cattle, held annual roundups for slaughtering horses wholesale. Sometimes the ranchers would turn the slaughtering into a game by lancing the horses across the necks, then leaving the bodies where they

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fell. When the rotting carcasses became too much for the inhabitants during summer, another game was to drive herds of horses over a cliff into the sea.

Dana himself witnessed such a spectacle of horse driving as indeed did everyone in California during the period. A few old-timers of California are still living who can recall a dry year "when a great herd of wild horses was rounded up near San Juan Capistrano and driven into the sea to save the grass for cattle." And this must have been at least fifty years after Dana's time.

Of the great herds of cattle slain each season during the roundups, nothing was used except the hides. The carcasses, once stripped, were so abundant upon the lands that the Mexicans of San Diego kept droves of dogs around the village to serve as scavengers. Each family would be surrounded (Dana supports the statement) by as many as ten or twenty dogs. In time their numbers became such that they spread out of town over the countryside.

The wilds of Point Loma swarmed with these dogs. A battalion of them attached themselves to Dana immediately he stepped ashore off the *Pilgrim*. During all his stay here they left neither him nor the vicinity of his hide house. He did not mind. Rather, he grew to like them, gave them names, and was amused by watching them chasing coyotes.

Yet, despite all this surplus beef, the Mexican soldiers in California still complained of starving. A soldier's prerogative, no doubt. The Californians refused to consider mutton as food. And of beef they would eat only the choicest of

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minute selections. But one can find difficulty trying to cry over the starving conditions of the few soldiers of San Diego's presidio. Yet Mexicans, whether starving or not, are Mexicans, we must suppose, and as such had their own right to prefer what they liked to eat.

Another reason for the surplus of cattle was the San Diego mission. Now that its days of glory were legally ended, the mission's one lingering padre had nothing to lose by the speedy translation of its great cattle herds into hides. All having been lost anyway, the lone padre decided he might as well cash in on the herds—what was left of them—before the entire lot was distributed by the government to private families.

The new Mexican officials already had seized the small parcels of grazing land and farming land which had been given to mission neophytes to have and to keep as their own. The new Mexican officials from down below took back these lands without a thank you and distributed them among their political friends. The Indians once again were left with nothing. Yet should an Indian be caught stealing one of the abundant range horses he would be flogged or shot, just on general principles.

The Mexican officials remained so brave when it came to punishing Indians that Dana, the visitor, could not help but be impressed:

When a crime has been committed by Indians, justice, or rather vengeance, is not so tardy. One Sunday afternoon, while I was at San Diego . . . the fellow [an Indian sus-

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pected of having stolen a horse] was seized at once, clapped into the calabozo, and kept there until an answer could be received from Monterey. A few weeks afterwards I saw the poor wretch, sitting on the bare ground, in front of the calabozo, with his feet chained to a stake, and handcuffs about his wrists. I knew there was very little hope for him. Although . . . the horse . . . [was] his own, and a favorite with him, yet he was an Indian, and that was enough. In about a week after I saw him, I heard that he had been shot. These few instances will serve to give one a notion of the distribution of justice in California.

As concerns Indian treatment, Dana could have been a writer of today looking back in all safety rather than a writer of a hundred years ago. For the Indians of our own prairies were yet to be massacred by Americans between his time and our time, and the plains were yet to see the caravans of covered wagons California-bound.

But Dana could call his shots so accurately that his one glimpse later of San Francisco's harbor convinced him—in 1835—that it would one day be California's main harbor. Yet to the villagers of San Diego such a thought was unthinkable, especially as San Diego's shipping revenue had been surpassing the revenue of San Francisco ten to one and sometimes twenty to one. Nor did this include the countless shipments out of San Diego which escaped revenue by being smuggled by way of the island hide-aways.

*Two Years Before the Mast*, written as the indirect result of a case of measles, has become a classic perhaps



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because in it each reader can find an honest report on something which seems to concern him as an individual. Sailors presume that the book is a report on sailor life. (Which it is, obviously.) Sociologists and legislators presume that the book was an appeal for better conditions at sea. (Which it was, obviously.) One could go on down the list, including adventure readers, history readers, and readers who like honest studies in human characters. But to San Diego the book means but one thing—a picture of the early San Diego prior to American occupancy of California.

While he was a young law student at Harvard, Dana's eyesight temporarily went bad as an aftermath of the measles. He was advised to do a turn at physical work before returning to his lawbooks. The Dana family having been for several generations Cambridge aristocrats, with influence everywhere, including shipping offices, the young Dana could easily have shipped as supercargo. But his decision to ship "before the mast" could have been—so far as San Diego is concerned—the method chosen by Providence to preserve for the harbor its one true picture of the hide-droghing days.

From an aristocratic Harvard student we were to have preserved for us the picture of how holes were cut around the edges of each hide by which it was staked out to dry, how the hides next were carried down to the San Diego beach at low tide and made fast there in small piles by ropes, before the tide came up and covered them. How for

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forty-eight hours they soaked there, were taken out, rolled up and carried in wheelbarrows to the vats containing brine, very strong brine, to be soaked for another forty-eight hours, then removed to a platform for twenty-four more. Then once again stretched and staked upon the ground.

While they had been staked, and while yet wet and soft, we used to go upon them with our knives, and carefully cut off all the bad parts—the pieces of meat and fat, which would corrupt and infect the whole if stowed away in a vessel for many months, the large flippers, the ears, and all the other parts which would prevent close storage.

. . . This was the most difficult part of our duty, as it required much skill to take off everything that ought to come off, and not to cut or injure the hide. It was also a long process, as six of us had to clean a hundred and fifty (daily), most of which required a great deal to be done by them, as the Spaniards are very careless in skinning their cattle. Then, too, as we cleaned them while they were staked out, we were obliged to kneel down upon them, which always gives beginners the back-ache. The first day I was so slow and awkward that I cleaned only eight; at the end of a few days I doubled my number; and, in a fortnight or three weeks, could keep up with the others, and clean my twenty-five.

This cleaning had to be finished before noon, for by that time the hides became too dry. After the sun had been upon them a few hours, they were carefully gone over with scrapers, “to get off all the grease which the sun brings out.”

Monotonous and lengthy as this description may sound,

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only by repeating it can one sense how bored Dana must have been too, after his first thousand. And why he became painfully anxious to leave California and get back to Harvard:

One year, more or less, might be of small importance to others, but it was everything to me. It was now just a year since we sailed from Boston, and, at the shortest, no vessel could expect to get under way under eight or nine months, which would make our absence two years in all. This would be pretty long, but would not be fatal. It would not necessarily be decisive of my future life. But one more year might settle the matter. I might be a sailor for life.

And a hide drogher!

For at night the hides would have to be spread out and opened again and, if fully dry, thrown upon a long, horizontal pole, five at a time, and beaten with flails. This took all the dust from them. Then, having been salted, scraped, cleaned, dried and beaten, they were stowed away in the hide warehouse.

Here ends their history, except that they are taken out again when the vessel is ready to go home, beaten, stowed away on board, carried to Boston, tanned, made into shoes and other articles for which leather is used, and many of them, very probably, in the end, brought back again to California in the shape of shoes, and worn out in pursuit of other bullocks, or in the curing of other hides.

Nothing specific in the way of a memento for Richard Henry Dana has been carved or erected or preserved in

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San Diego. But then, probably, none is needed. The water of the bay is much the same water. So, too, is the sand of the beach where he worked. So, too, is the well-hidden cave off a canyon on Point Loma wherein the four-flushing first mate off the *Pilgrim* hid so successfully while jumping ship. He escaped on another vessel.

**T**HE MAN WHO SUPPLIED the harbor with its Early California Romance was an American—Captain Henry Fitch.

He was an American skipper, and he went through the whole ritual of romance, including an elopement and an escape to sea at night with the village beauty. And against other obstacles, including imprisonment.

But his name unfortunately does not blend itself well with an everlasting love song as sung to guitars. Aside from that, perhaps, the rest is all there.

Until Fitch came to the harbor the village's other main domestic excitement had remained the memory of Pedro Fages, one of the first acting governors. Fages was all that could have been asked in the way of a hard-drinking, hard-working and hard-talking hero. Almost everybody had a good word for him except Father Serra. But, alas,

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Lieutenant Fages already had a wife, an aristocrat back home in Mexico. And she was a little hellcat.

She considered California a land of barbarism. She would not join her husband in the new land. But by letters he made the mistake of begging her to come and join him until, finally, through the pressure of officials in Mexico, she at last was obliged to come. He went overland to Loreto to meet her. He accompanied her to San Diego in the fall of 1783. She was the first woman "of quality" to grace the colony, which probably means she was about the first real white woman.

Along the route to San Diego she was greeted and feted as royalty by the Indians and soldiers. But she cried about the poor Indians all being naked. She handed out to them most of her belongings and the belongings of her husband. He told her: "You'll be going naked yourself if you keep that up. For you can't buy women's clothes in California."

Within a year she was finding this to be true, too true. She was already so fed up with the country that she wanted both of them to leave. But he, having the neat position of acting governor, refused to give it all up for her.

"Ah, then you have another woman. That is it." So for three months she refused to let the governor sleep with her, a punishment which caused no end of speculation, comment and opinions among California's tiny population.

But the three months' punishment was not sufficient for the governor. He still refused to give up his job and leave

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California. This so infuriated her that she looked for "the woman," and her suspicions fell on an Indian servant girl whom Fages "had rescued from barbarism on the Colorado" and had brought to California.

The governor's wife followed the governor one morning when he went to call the servant. She accused him of intentions to sin. She made the accusations in such a screaming voice that the entire village heard and listened throughout the turbulent morning.

Among her lesser public proclamations was the announcement that "the devil can carry me off" before she would bed with him, or even live with him in the same house.

The governor, to get away from the noise, ran to the padres and asked them if they could do something about the situation. They said they could examine witnesses. This they did, all the villagers being not only available as witnesses but also eager. The padres discovered no grounds for divorce. But rather than take chances on their own decision, they shuffled the case to the bishop in Mexico. This, of course, would require months and months. During the interim the padres ordered her to remain "in the retirement of her own apartments, separated from the gubernatorial couch and board," and to refrain from shrieking her charges over the land.

Then Fages, for reasons of his own, decided to leave town on business. He asked the padres if she could be kept in the protective seclusion of the mission during his

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absence. The Fathers agreed, and carried the official documents to her for her removal.

On sight of these documents she shut herself in her private apartments and emphasized her fury by throwing furniture at the walls.

The governor did not like this, so he broke down the locked door, tied her with a lasso, and carried her to the mission himself. He then departed from town—leaving the rest up to the padres.

They report, a trifle humbly in their files, about finding “the lady by no means an easy subject to handle.” Especially were they perplexed when she screeched her wrath in church during Mass. To stop her they threatened her with flogging and chains. The threat quieted her into trying a new method. To get herself and the governor out of California, she composed a petition in writing to the highest officials in Spain that the governor be removed because the climate of California was injurious to his health.

But Fages and his wife were not to leave California. At least, not right then. Yet for the sake of a local Early California Romance, how convenient it would be to report that the two were reunited during a boat ride over San Diego’s bay just as the sun was touching Point Loma, thereby awakening in her the woman’s part to play in an empire yet to be built! But the records, unfortunately, do not continue from there. These special records were destroyed in a fire in what is now San Diego’s Old Town.



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But the record of the San Diego romance of Captain Henry Fitch and his Doña Josefa, the beautiful daughter of Joaquín Carrillo, is well preserved in its entirety and deserves to be. For this romance, with all its ecclesiastical troubles, covered more than four years.

Henry Fitch, the youthful captain of the *Maria Ester*, first was in San Diego in the 1830s. The young American's instant affection for the well-guarded Doña Josefa was a blessing to behold, and all of San Diego beheld it.

He gave her a written promise of marriage, her parents approved the match, and a Dominican friar agreed to perform the ceremony when the time should come.

The time was long in coming, more than two years. For he, being a Protestant and a foreigner, first had to undergo baptism in the Church. Also, other civil and ecclesiastical matters had to be arranged and authorities reached in Mexico. At last the worst seemed over, and the marriage ceremony started under way in the San Diego home of the Carrillos.

In the last minute an uncle of the bride refused to serve as witness. He could not bear to see his niece married to an American, dashing and popular though he was. When the uncle backed out, the friar who had agreed to perform the ceremony backed out, too. The home became a turmoil of sobs and arguments—and a friend whispered to the miserable couple that there were other countries where the marriage laws were less stringent.

“Then why don't you carry me off, Don Enrique?”

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This was her suggestion. He already had started a trading store in San Diego, the first store, and he hated to give it up. But he did.

Another American vessel, the *Vulture*, was in port and ready to sail. The skipper, Captain Barry, had delayed his departure to attend the wedding. He whispered that he would be only too happy to carry them away. He agreed to return to his vessel and to send a boat ashore immediately. He told them where the boat would be secretly waiting.

Pio Pico, cousin of the girl and a power in California, joined the scheme. He slipped out to the corral, saddled the fastest horse there, and hoisted Doña Josefa into the saddle with him. Why they did not use two horses, horses being so plentiful, is a feature not explained. But together they galloped down to the bay just as the boat was touching the beach. And by morning the *Vulture*, the couple aboard, was far at sea. Or at least comparatively far, as far as a sailing vessel could sail in the weak wind of the California night.

Three months later the *Vulture* reached Valparaiso, where the couple went ashore and were married.

But the story is not ended.

The church authorities of San Diego were scandalized. Everybody, in fact, talked of nothing else. Some said she had been forcibly abducted. Some said . . . and said . . . and said . . . But the unanimous opinion seemed to be to wait and see if "those two" dared return.

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“Those two” did dare. A year later Henry Fitch returned with his bride aboard his new command, the *Leonar*, and with their infant son.

Nor was San Diego then, as now perhaps, a town that forgets. No less a personage than Padre Sanches at San Gabriel, vicar and ecclesiastical judge of the whole territory, was the one who summoned Fitch to present himself “for trial on most serious charges.”

For reply, Fitch sent his marriage certificate to the vicar, then cruised up the coast to Santa Barbara and Monterey. The vicar at once sent an order to Monterey that Fitch be arrested and brought back for trial.

Fitch was arrested, and his wife was placed under custody in a private home. Later both were brought south. The wife was again placed in custody in a private home, and Fitch was placed in prison. All of California took a hand in the case. But the governor, being Echeandía at the time, leaned ever so lightly in favor of the couple.

This behavior by the governor so infuriated the vicar that he ordered the governor’s arrest on charges of “gross infringement on ecclesiastical authority.” It was officially declared that the governor was “a culprit before God’s tribunal and should be brought to trial.”

As a result the governor soon lost his governorship. It was turned over to Victoria. In this fashion the trial of Fitch continued on and on, witnesses being examined not only in San Diego but also in San Gabriel. Mrs Fitch was moved to another home farther away because the first

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home was considered too close to the prison containing Fitch.

First, Fitch would be taken from his prison to be interrogated before the ecclesiastical court. Next, his wife would be summoned for questioning before the same ecclesiastical court. This process continued for so many months and months that even the Californians in time became a bit weary of the lengthy affair. Fitch was willing, for the sake of the infant son's legitimacy, to have the marriage declared null and be married over again.

But the court, in turn, could find no official reason for declaring the marriage null.

Finally, the one official flaw the court could find was the fact that preceding the marriage in Valparaiso the couple had not received the sacraments.

So:

. . . considering the great scandal which Don Enrique has caused in this province, I condemn him to give as penance and reparation a bell of at least fifty pounds in weight for the church at Los Angeles, which barely has a borrowed one. Moreover, the couple must present themselves in church with lighted candles in their hands to hear High Mass for three "dias festivos," and recite together for thirty days one third of the rosary of the holy virgin.

The couple complied with the sentence, and gladly, and so lived happily ever afterwards—no doubt.

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## 16

**I**N KEEPING WITH the principle of most well-regulated cities, San Diego also has near by its historical battlefield. But this field, even today, is actually a field, or rather a wide-open range of bouncing hills some thirty or forty miles northeast of the harbor.

The opinion seems unanimous that upon this field was fought the decisive battle between Americans and Californians for possession of California.

Maybe this is true. For the battle certainly was California's biggest and bloodiest and craziest. At the same time the Americans, under General Stephen W. Kearny and aided by Kit Carson, had the hell licked out of them.

The Americans lost at least twenty-one men, sixteen others were wounded, while the Californians lost none and had none badly wounded. Yet during the battle the Americans outnumbered the Californians almost two to one.

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But as one runs his eye over the records dealing with the United States' annexation of California, nothing makes much dried-and-pickled logic. San Diego's port was as much involved in the hurly-burly as any of the other few ports in California. Maybe more so. For throughout the whole affair, throughout the arrivals and departures of the few American men-of-war, throughout the arrivals and departures of a skeletonized American battalion—throughout all this San Diego's social life remained more amused than frightened. Every woman, whether Californian or American, had a good time dancing with the soldiers and marines, and the rickety military band of Commodore Robert F. Stockton from off the man-of-war *Congress* played ashore in the village's plaza each afternoon.

By this time the Californians themselves were sick of the governors sent up from Mexico to rule. These Mexican governors and ex-governors and ex-ex-governors continued to yap among themselves, staging their peculiar revolutions between the north and the south. And the first serious American military expedition to roam over California—the little expedition under Frémont—arrived to do its historical roaming (and its technically illegal roaming) while two California governors were trying to decide just which was governor. These two governors, Pico and Castro, never did succeed in deciding. So, the both of them—with the coming of the Americans—played at a few skirmishes, saw there was no use, gave up, and went back to Mexico.

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The situation continued running along much like that, in San Diego as elsewhere. But the real worry of the United States in regard to the possession of California remained England. And even France, but not so much. If the Californians, being fed up with Mexico, decided to join the protectorate of another country, England was considered more than willing to accept the responsibility. The fear was one with which the roaming officer, Frémont, made a big play. But then Frémont was always making a big play on everything. Though he supposedly was on a peaceful topographical expedition, he created fears where none existed, and was always talking about how cruelly the Californians were treating American residents.

It was the same old European game of conquest as duplicated today. Frémont went around begging to be "attacked" so that he could say that Americans had been insulted, even tortured. And he made an international incident of the fact that two Americans, Cowie and Fowler, had been captured, robbed and killed by a band of Mexican desperadoes headed by "Four-fingered Jack" (Bernardino Garcia).

Frémont represented these bandits as typical Californians, whereas the real Californians were more than anxious to co-operate with the United States, even be a part of the United States, if only the Californians would not be considered by the incoming Americans as "deadly enemies."

Indeed, one of the first American flags hoisted in San

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Diego was made by the three daughters of Juan Bandini, a Californian. The daughters, Josefa, Ysabel and Arcadia, sewed the flag together from white muslin sheets and red and blue flannel. This flag, I understand, is now preserved in Washington.

But this business of having flags hauled up, then down, then up again comprised most of the so-called war. That is, with the exception of the Battle of San Pasqual, near San Diego. And this battle (absolutely unnecessary) would have been far better for all concerned if left un-battled.

But some of the Americans, like Frémont and Kearny, actually went out of their way at times to pick fights with the Californians, as I gather it, when no fights were necessary, and when a round of drinks would have served as well, if not better.

Yet Frémont seemed so anxious for a definite war with the Californians when most of the Californians were equally anxious to be friends with the Americans, and accept them, that the story of the only blood of Frémont's personal campaign is not a pretty one.

A boat containing four men was seen landing near Point San Pedro. They were on their way to the mission, and Frémont ordered Kit Carson to go out and shoot them.

Carson must have been a bit puzzled too, for he asked: "You mean, Captain, shall I take those men prisoners?"

Frémont's reply was: "I have no room for prisoners."

So Carson and three companions rode to within fifty paces of the strangers as they climbed from the boat. The



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Americans dismounted, took deliberate aim and shot three of the four. The victims were an old man who owned a ranch near Santa Clara, and two twin brothers, sons of a prominent Californian.

No reason for the murder has ever been found, and the bodies were left on the ground several days until discovered by other Californian ranchers. And they naturally did not understand the reason for it, either. One explanation credited to Frémont is that the triple murder of the two unarmed youths and the unarmed old man was in retaliation for the murder of the two Americans by Mexican bandits far away and long ago.

But the prize incident of all, of course, had been previously pulled by Commodore Thomas Ap Catesby Jones of the United States Navy. This was several years previous (1842) while peaceful diplomacy was still under way between the United States and the government of the Californians. He heard that war had been declared between the United States and Mexico (war had not been declared), so he landed 150 marines at Monterey, took the town against no objection, and hoisted the American flag.

Then the same day he learned that war had not been declared, so he took down the flag again, while the Californians stood around wondering what it was all about.

The aftermath was down in San Diego when Captain Phelps, of the *Alert*, heard that Commodore Jones had captured Monterey, so Captain Phelps moved ashore on San Diego. He spiked the unprotected guns of old Fort

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Guijarros (Ballast Point) and threw into the bay all the copper shot. At the time only five soldiers were in San Diego. But they had neither ammunition nor guns. So, having nothing else to do, they stood around watching the Americans wreck the already wrecked fort, and now and then lent a hand.

But even Frémont, a genius in making enemies out of Californians, failed to make any out of the Californians of San Diego when his company arrived on the sloop of war *Cyane*, Captain Samuel F. DuPont, for the hoisting of the first official American flag over the port. The words "first official American flag," of course, should be underlined. This first official flag was a naval one, and borrowed off the *Cyane*.

This party, including 160 men, was a gruff lot, including as it did Kit Carson, four Delaware Indians, a Doctor Semple, who stood six feet six, and the one and only Ezekiel Merritt, famed for his accuracy with chewing tobacco.

Carson was still wobbly from seasickness, this voyage down from San Pedro having been his first taste of the sea. But all of them, nevertheless, must have presented a wild-looking party. Known as the "California Battalion," the men had been tramping and riding throughout California these many months. Frémont was dressed in a blouse and leggings and wore a felt hat. The others wore loose coats of deerskin, tied with thongs in front. Their trousers were of deerskin, too. But the Californians of San

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Diego were so hospitable to Frémont that, as soon as the flag was hoisted, he was presented with a beautiful sorrel horse by Bandini, one of San Diego's leading Californians.

Frémont needed a horse for riding back to the pueblo of Los Angeles to hoist the American flag there in company with Commodore Stockton. So a Californian presented for the purpose the best horse he owned. And thus Frémont rode away, taking most of his party with him, and leaving not more than ten Americans to "guard" the town.

This first official flag in San Diego was raised July 29, 1846. And the various flag raisings along the coastal towns might still have gone along without much incident, and certainly without the subsequent Battle of San Pasqual, had not two of the American officers become altogether too arrogant for the Californians.

Especially was this arrogance shown in Los Angeles, where the American officer, left in charge, began considering all Californians as if they were children or Indians. No account was taken of the people's love for amusement, peculiarities, habits and outdoor life. But the American officer issued curfew laws, rules about this and that, all silly and all of them enforced as if the Californians were a vanquished race requiring subordination and a master.

The Californians not only were amazed by such nonsense, but they were hurt. And those among them who had been outright friends to the Americans in the beginning, and had welcomed them and wanted them, now began to wonder if, after all, the Americans were nothing more

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than a bunch of arrogant adventurers. Objection to the crazy laws gave courage to the few Californian outsiders who easily enough could have been considered bandits, but who now, under the turn of events, could be considered patriots and receive support. Thus the American flags went up, then down, up and down, over the various places. And confusion returned for everybody.

No sooner had some of these offended Californians hauled down the American flag in Los Angeles than a band of horsemen galloped down to San Diego to change around the flags there.

The defending garrison was so small, and the number of oncoming Californians from up Los Angeles way was reported so large, perhaps fifty, that the Americans in San Diego along with their Californian friends in the village decided that caution was better than valor. They rowed out to an American whaler, the *Stonington*, lying in the harbor, and for twenty days remained aboard her out there.

The Californian horsemen from up north reached San Diego. And even as the refugees watched from aboard the whaler, down came the American flag and up went the colors of Mexico.

A call for help was dispatched by sea, five men leaving the harbor in a small boat belonging to the whaler. They were obliged to row most of the way to San Pedro, a distance of more than a hundred miles. But their call for reinforcements was successful, and on their return to San

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Diego the Americans aboard the whaler decided to try to retake the town.

But what had been worrying them the most was the two ancient cannons at the presidio. The Americans and their Californian friends had feared that the band of horsemen might get smart, mount the cannons on ox-carts, drag the guns down to the beach, and from there bombard the whaler.

So, to put an end to this worry, Albert B. Smith sneaked ashore in a rowboat at La Playa, then from there walked about fifteen miles in a half-circle and reached the presidio from the rear. Without being seen, he spiked the guns and returned to the whaler.

This neat trick gave such confidence to the Americans and the Californians marooned out there aboard the whaler that next morning all of them landed and marched upon the town. With them they dragged two cannons from the vessel. The sight of these cannons so disturbed the Californian-Mexican horsemen from the north that they promptly hauled down their flag (to save it from the Americans) and scampered away to the rim of a safe hill.

Albert B. Smith, once a hero always a hero, now climbed the flagpole with an American flag and some new halyards. While he was climbing the pole to make fast the flag, the Californian-Mexicans continued firing at him from their safe hill. But they were far away, and in answer to their shots he waved his hat.

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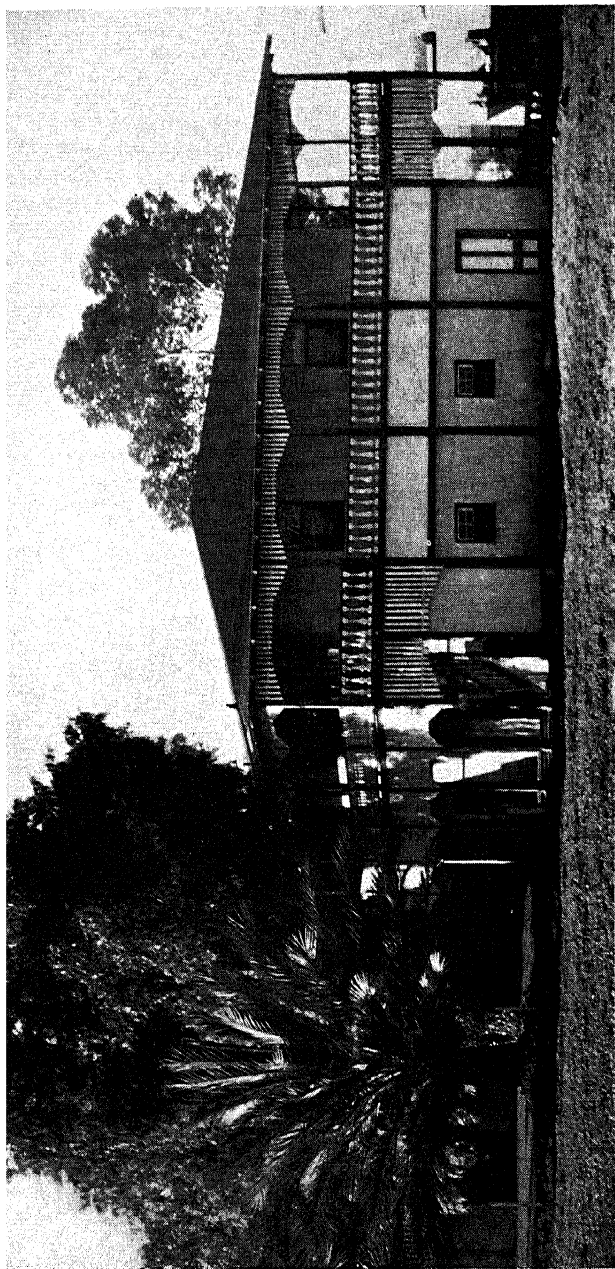
So again the score was: nobody hit, nobody injured, another flag up and another flag down.

Commodore Stockton, in answer to the call for help by the men who had rowed to San Pedro, finally arrived in San Diego aboard the sixty-gun ship *Congress*.

He found the conditions by no means settled and snug in San Diego, the surrounding hills being "horse-covered" by the Californian-Mexicans. Their outdoor pastime was taking pot shots at whomever in town they did not like. For instance, J. M. Orozco, one of the Californian horsemen, had selected for his special amusement Miguel de Pedorena, another Californian who had stayed with the Americans. Poor Pedorena was haunted by the bullets everywhere he went. But he became especially annoyed when the bullets grazed him while he was escorting a young lady.

Because of this, Pedorena decided to have it out with Orozco and led a pursuit. The pursuers dragged a cannon with them, and the cannon furnished sufficient noise to scare the Californian-Mexicans from a breastwork of trenches. They retreated up the valley a mile or so towards the mission.

Yet these Californian rangers had so depleted the stock in the vicinity of San Diego that the villagers were out of food. So Commodore Stockton sent the whaler *Stonington* south from San Diego to Ensenada with an expedition headed by Captain Samuel Gibson. At Ensenada the expedition rounded up ninety horses and two hundred head of



*Photograph by L. J. Geddes*

### CASA BANDINI

Built about 1825, by Don Juan Bandini, leading citizen in Old Town. This house was the center of much historically important activity. Headquarters for Commodore Stockton for a time. It was here that the first American flag was made for California by Don José's four daughters.





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cattle and drove them overland back to San Diego, a matter of about ninety miles. This helped, although the stock was in such poor condition from the hard driving that the animals required several weeks of rest before being good for anything.

But Commodore Stockton lost no time in constructing better fortifications for San Diego. His sailors and marines off the *Congress* were set to work digging a ditch fortified by casks filled with earth. These casks were placed at intervals of two feet, and in between the casks were mounted twelve guns commanding the approaches from Los Angeles and Mission Valley. His garrison now had a hundred men.

San Diego at last was secure, and the evenings were spent in dancing, and the afternoons in listening to band music in the plaza beneath the American flag. The one casualty so far was an American who had been killed, more by accident than intention, while watering his horse at the river. As for the Californian rangers, some were deserting and coming into San Diego, others were taken prisoners, and still others were going farther back into the hills to join another party of Californian horsemen assembling there under command of General Andrés Pico.

Life on the harbor would have remained quite lovely, perhaps, and there would have been no Battle of San Pasqual—except for the sudden appearance of a United States officer bearing a message to Commodore Stockton that General Stephen W. Kearny was approaching San Diego from New Mexico with a new force of Americans.

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This was Commodore Stockton's first word that Kearny was in the vicinity, or even was supposed to be on his way to California at all. For Kearny, when last reported, was still in New Mexico accomplishing a clean-up campaign there. But President Polk's order to Kearny (in answer to Frémont's wild-eyed alarms) to come to San Diego was news to Commodore Stockton. Very much news. Stockton immediately sent an expedition of thirty-nine men from San Diego to meet Kearny and escort him to town.

This might have been all right, too, had not Kit Carson already met Kearny and told him that the Californians were push-overs. Carson was running an official message to Washington when he met Kearny. And Kearny, in turn, had ordered Carson to let another runner continue with the message, and to turn around and guide Kearny's little army of dragoons to San Diego.

The expedition of thirty-nine men from San Diego, on their way to greet Kearny, dragged with them a brass four-pounder piece, which was the first mistake. For the mountings of this gun had been made by the ship's carpenter of the *Congress*, and there was no harness for attaching horses. So the Americans had to drag it along by lariats attached to the pommels of their saddles, and by the second day out they would have preferred to throw away the gun. Indeed, as events turned out later, the Americans would have been fortunate if they had thrown the gun away. But they continued on with the gun just the same, dragging it up and over the rough grounds, through the chaparral, and getting

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to hate the gun more and more each mile of the wretched going.

Finally they joined Kearny at Ballena in the midst of a beastly cloudburst, and nobody was happy, Kearny's hundred men least of all. For on their way from Santa Fe they had undergone an awful march by the Gila to the Colorado Junction across the Colorado Desert and over the California mountains. Besides, their campaign in New Mexico had been a severe one and lengthy. The men as well as their horses and mules were groggy from the strain, and emaciated, and the cold rain continued pouring all day and all night there in the camp.

But despite all this General Kearny, on learning from the San Diego men that the main body of Californian rangers was encamped near the Indian village of San Pasqual, decided to end the whole "California War" right then and there by attacking.

During the council of war in the rain, a surprise night attack was planned, then canceled. It might have worked, or again it might not have worked. At least it would probably have resulted in something better than what did occur. Ten men were sent at night to the Indian village to spy on the camp of the Californians and found everyone asleep inside the huts. The Americans awakened an Indian and talked with him, but the talk awakened some of the Californian rangers, and they asked what was going on. With this the Americans departed, and departed so rapidly that they left behind them an army blanket and a jacket.

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The Californian rangers, under General Andrés Pico, thus learned for the first time that Americans were in the vicinity. They neither pursued nor fled, but just waited. The American spies, instead of obtaining information for Kearny, had succeeded in doing just the opposite. They had given information to the opposing general, Andrés Pico.

But, though realizing all this, Kearny for some reason still remained convinced on making what laughingly can be called a surprise attack.

So, just about daylight, the water-soaked Americans broke camp and draggled their way towards the Indian village for the "surprise."

Kit Carson, seeing all this, may have begun to have qualms about the whole idea. But if so, it was too late now for him to do anything about it, even if he tried, which is doubtful. He or someone else, though, should have persisted in a suggestion that the rifles be recharged. At least one would think so, for the powder in the rifles was soaking wet from the day and night of downpour. In the actual battle few of the rifles could be fired, but had to be used as clubs.

Kearny was so convinced that the mere sight of Americans would be enough to frighten away the Californian rangers (or lancers) that he trudged along with everything but a band to announce his coming. Some of the horses were too lame and weak to keep up with the other horses, and the men on mules were left far behind them all.

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As for hoping for a surprise, the only thing in Kearny's favor was a fog. Yet though the fog may partly have succeeded in blanketing the Americans from the Californians, it also hid the Americans from one another, and nobody knew just who was where, the infantry walking along somewhere far behind the mules and horses.

The vanguard of twelve mounted men reached the rim of the hill first. The campfires of the Indian village in the valley penetrated the haze and showed the Californian horsemen, armed with their customary lances.

Kearny, without waiting for his other men to arrive and get organized, immediately ordered the twelve mounted men, under Captain Abraham R. Johnston, to charge. It was the story of the "Light Brigade" all over again. They charged, and with General Kearny right behind them.

The awaiting Californians, being elegant horsemen, would just as soon have galloped away, no doubt, as expected of them. But the amusing spectacle of seeing only a few horsemen galloping across a long distance of open country to attack eighty lancers was a sight too tempting for the Californians. They prepared their lances and waited, and the game was easy and was fun—for the rangers.

Few of the rangers had rifles. But the few who did have rifles each selected a target, and Captain Johnston, receiving a ball in his forehead, was the first to fall. He was in front, the best target, and the Americans who did not fall were carried on down the hill by their own mo-

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mentum and ran smack into the picket-fence array of lances.

The survivors tried to hold up and swing back. And fortunately for them another band of Americans reached the rim of the hill, saw to their amazement what was going on down below, and did the best they could by charging also on their tired horses and balky mules. The confusion, lacking as it did any semblance of order, was terrible.

General Andrés Pico, on seeing these few additional Americans coming down the hill, retreated with his own lancers just long enough to pull another easy trick.

His men galloped away as if fleeing the battle for good. But at a junction with the village road half his party doubled back up a side trail, where, behind the concealment of huge boulders, they waited for the small party of pursuing Americans to pass by. Then his Californians closed in upon the Americans from the rear. Also, his Californians who had gone on ahead, as if fleeing, suddenly swung about with their lances. Thus were the few Americans caught in the oldest trap of all, an old-fashioned ambush, and the butchery was on.

In much this same manner throughout the hours of that morning (December 6, 1846) the obliging Americans continued to feed themselves chunk by chunk to the lances of the Californian rangers.

As soon as each new body of Kearny's scattered men reached the rim of the hill and observed for the first time that a battle was under way, the Americans faithfully sacri-

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ficed themselves to the affair bit by bit, piece by piece, and some of the scattered troops did not get there until after the whole bloody show was over.

The Americans' small four-pounder was dragged by frightened runaway mules into the nest of the Californians. They captured the mules by killing the driver, accepted the four-pounder with thanks, and turned it back upon the Americans.

One wonders today, of course, why San Diego, the same as the rest of California, regards with such noble reverence the site of the Battle of San Pasqual. Some symbol, though, is necessary, presumably, for the period of the transfer of California from Mexico to the United States. And this battle is regarded as being not only the biggest one but also the decisive and final one. It was all of these, all right. It was so decisive that it nearly turned California into an independent republic after already having been won by the United States.

The California lancers, flushed by the success of a battle made to order for their type of fighting on horseback, could easily enough have stayed in business. But they saw no special purpose in doing so. Besides, most of their relatives and friends already had "gone" American, as demonstrated in San Diego prior to the unnecessary battle.

Yet today the site of the Battle of San Pasqual, near Escondido, is considered quite the thing for San Diego visitors to see. And once in a while the marines of the San Diego Marine Base have been carried out there in trucks

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to "refight" the battle on its anniversaries. Crowds from San Diego and from Los Angeles have gathered to watch, and if the idea continues long enough the day will come when Kearny will be credited with having won "an amazing victory against odds." In fact, one might conceivably be convinced that the day already has come. It started coming as early as July 1848, when he was nominated for the brevet of major general for "gallant conduct at San Pasqual." He was gallant, all right, but so too were his mules.

Every American, save two, who had been engaged in the actual fighting was either killed or wounded. And strangely enough Captain Johnston, the first to fall, was the only casualty from firearms. The Californians had performed their hand-to-hand butchery with their short heavy-headed lances, the favorite and main weapon of the rangers at all times. And the Americans, because their firearms were water-soaked, had been obliged to try to beat the Californians at their own hand-to-hand game of clubbing, stabbing and slashing.

But when the remaining American troops in the rear finally straggled with the baggage carts up to the rim of the hill, the Californian lancers drew away to the concealment of boulders to see what would happen next. Kearny was so badly wounded that another officer, Captain Turner, had to take temporary command. The miserable survivors, though wounded almost to a man, banded together to await another attack by the Californians and



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were joined by the new Americans who had not been in the battle at all.

The Americans were besieged and knew it, and throughout the day and night they waited for the surrounding lancers to attack again. At night the Americans secretly buried their many dead under a willow tree. The camp, if it could be called a camp, was on cactus-covered ground devoid of water. Nor was there food. The night in the hills was cold, the wounded were without blankets, and more of the men died before morning. The Californians could have wiped the survivors out with one rush had General Pico cared to do so.

But it was strange about that man. During the height of the battle he had watched his Californians while he himself was fighting, and whenever he saw an American unhorsed and wounded he had ordered his Californians to spare the American's life. But Pico could not be everywhere at once or see everything at once, naturally, and so some of the dead Americans were found to have as many as ten lance thrusts in them.

Pico also had fought a hand-to-hand duel with Captain Benjamin D. Moore, the best swordsman among the Americans. Pico was armed with a lance, and with it he broke Captain Moore's sword. The captain then reached for his pistol (which probably would not have gone off anyway), but two Californians saw the gesture and so lanced the captain to death.

The fate of Captain Archibald H. Gillespie, who had

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led the San Diego expedition to greet Kearny, was more fortunate. Captain Gillespie was struck in the mouth by "El Guerrero," whose real name was Dolores Higuera. The blow knocked Gillespie off his horse, and also knocked out two of his teeth.

"El Guerrero" presumed that Captain Gillespie was dead, so seized his horse with a splendid saddle and bridle and kept them. Later, on learning that the captain had not been killed, "El Guerrero" offered to return the horse, saddle and bridle to Gillespie. But the captain (this was weeks later in San Diego) refused the gifts by saying they had been won fairly, and that if "El Guerrero" had not been in such a hurry to make off with them he might have noticed that Gillespie was not dead and have lanced him again.

The young Californian lancer who had wounded Kearny also could have killed him. But on seeing that he was sufficiently disabled to refrain from more active fighting, the Californian quickly bowed an apology for the two wounds he had inflicted, then rode away. Weeks later in San Diego, Kearny returned the compliment by asking to see this young man. They shook hands, and Kearny thanked him.

With the Indians, though (and there were a few California Indians on the American side), the Californians were not so hospitable. As a Californian was running his lance into an Indian, the Indian said, "Basta! [Enough!]"

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The Californian replied, "Otra vez [Once more]," ran the Indian through a second time, and added: "Ahi está [There it is]."

"Sí, señor," replied the Indian politely, then died.

The Americans had with them, also, a few Delaware Indians who had served as guides previously for Frémont, but who had been returning with Kit Carson to the East. They had stayed with Carson when he had been ordered to remain with Kearny. These Delaware Indians did not believe in taking prisoners, of whom the Americans had only two.

But these prisoners were considered especially valuable to the Americans in case General Pico should suggest an exchange of prisoners. The Delaware Indians, though, remained so persistent in wanting to kill the two prisoners that finally an American guard, Philip Crosthwaite, had to be placed over the Indians and another guard over the two captured Californians.

Kit Carson had been thrown out of the battle early by being knocked off his horse and having his rifle smashed. Yet two or three nights later when the miserable camp, with its wounded and its dying, remained besieged on all sides by the Californians, Carson in company with Lieutenant Edward F. Beale succeeded in crawling through the Californian sentries and then running barefoot to San Diego for help.

Contrary to popular supposition, though, neither Carson nor Beale was the first to reach San Diego with news of

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the disaster. An officer, Captain Stokes, reached San Diego first. But his head start of several days was due to the fact that he had not waited for the engagement to end before starting for help. When he saw how things were going against the Americans, off he went with the word to Commodore Stockton.

Yet, for reasons which to this day have not been clarified, nobody in San Diego seemed to pay much attention to Stokes's report. The dancing continued as usual, the Americans there being unable to believe, no doubt, that the Californians could do damage to a full-time general like Kearny even if they had tried.

So the situation in the besieged camp became hourly more and more gruesome, with the hungry, thirsty and wounded soldiers trying their best to conceal from the Californians the desperate state of the situation. The camp had one surgeon, the overworked Dr Griffin. Kearny, as a gesture of bravado, offered to General Pico the loan of the doctor for treating Pico's wounded men. But Pico answered that he had no wounded. Thus the gesture completely backfired.

Three other Americans meanwhile had hurried to San Diego for help, and bearing a letter to Captain Turner. The letter asked for provisions, and for carts for carrying the wounded, and also for a strong relief party to accompany the survivors to San Diego. But it failed to state that, unless relief did come, a massacre awaited the Americans out there on the field.

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Anyway, nothing much was done about this second summons, either. Nobody knows exactly why. Commodore Stockton received the message while attending a dance. One of the explanations for the delay in organizing a relief expedition was that all the available horses had been taken by the San Diego expedition sent to greet Kearny originally. But whatever the reason, if any, nothing much happened, at least soon enough.

And the three messengers, on their way back to Kearny from San Diego, were captured by the Californians.

The next morning, after the capture of the messengers, Pico sent to Kearny a ranger bearing not only a proposal for an exchange of prisoners but also some tea, sugar and a change of clothing. This merchandise, though, was for Gillespie. His servant in San Diego had sent the gifts by one of the captured messengers, and Pico merely was forwarding the gifts.

But by this time Kit Carson and Lieutenant Beale had seen about enough of such byplay while the wounded were suffering and dying around them, so they volunteered to make a break through the Californian sentries, if possible, and to deliver another (the third) message to San Diego for help. An Indian volunteered to attempt the break with them.

The Californians maintained three rows of mounted and moving sentries, and to get through them Carson and Beale removed their shoes to avoid making sounds. The shoes were stuffed inside the men's belts, and the

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men themselves bellied their way along on elbows and knees during the darkness of night.

The Californian sentries had a habit of dismounting periodically to put an ear to the ground, the better presumably to catch sounds. And once a sentry dismounted directly in front of Beale and Carson. After listening, the sentry struck flint to light a cigarette. Whereupon both Beale and Carson supposed that the light was a signal and that the signal was the end for sure. Beale cupped his lips to Carson's ear: "We'll jump him, then run for it."

Carson whispered back: "Not yet. I've been in worse places before. Keep crawling."

The sentry remounted, rode away, and the Americans kept crawling. Once assured that they had crawled through the third row of guards, they arose, and each took a separate route for San Diego, the better to make sure that one of them at least got there. But while they were crawling, their shoes had dropped out of their belts. So they ran the entire way barefoot, something like thirty miles or more.

Beale was a navy officer off the *Congress*, in port, and so was fairly familiar with the back country of San Diego. He was the first to reach the village. But he was so bloody from cacti, so weak from thirst and hunger, that the pickets of the garrison had to carry him inside. He mumbled his story, then became delirious.

Soon he was followed by the Indian (who had gone by himself from the start), and then by Kit Carson. It was up to Carson to give the full straightforward account of

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the camp's desperation. And he did it in such a way that help no longer could be denied or ignored. But his feet were so bloody, so lacerated and so swollen that he could no longer stand on them.

Kearny's besieged men had not stayed in the same camp all the time. They had tried to progress towards San Diego, yet from every hillside the Californians had watched them and annoyed them, waiting for just the right conditions to close in on them. Also, the Californians had stampeded many of the Americans' remaining horses by driving into them a band of wild mules with hides attached to their tails. One of these mules was shot during the stampede and provided broth for the wounded and meat for the others.

Along about two o'clock in the morning, while they were having this food, the men heard the voices of American sailors and marines arriving from San Diego. Most of this relief expedition consisted of the crew off the *Congress*.

These sailors were not accustomed to back-country fighting, naturally. But they certainly made the best of their first opportunity now. Some of them had tried to ride the few horses remaining in San Diego. The riding tactics were most peculiar, if not efficient, and the sailors' wild whoops as much as anything were what frightened away the Californian lancers during the night. For at dawn the hills for the first time were free of silhouettes of them. The rescued party moved towards the harbor, dragging their wounded in carts and upon poles behind mules.

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Aftermath to an aftermath: Kearny in his reports to Washington claimed such a decisive victory that today San Diego has a great sweep of land known as Camp Kearny. Soldiers trained there for the First World War. And once in a while dirigibles have landed there—when the navy had dirigibles.

But Andrés Pico was never to know anything about all this, so it is just as well.



ON THE OCEANSIDE of Point Loma today are the abandoned pits wherein the Mormons, in response to a "revelation," dug for coal and found a vein of it four and a half feet thick.

A bigger shaft was sunk, machinery was installed, engineers were employed. One vein led to another, but all the veins petered out finally, until today nothing remains except the humps of distributed soil, overgrown by brittle brush, "lemonade bush," and washed by the rains of more than fourscore winters.

This Mormon Battalion, as these experimental settlers quite rightly were called, comprised the first wholesale expedition of American families from the East to move in on San Diego. With their wagons they plodded overland from their homes in Missouri and Illinois to escape persecution, perhaps even massacre—for open season was

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being held on the Mormons then, so we understand. The period is best established by the fact that the Mormon Battalion reached San Diego a surprisingly few weeks after the Battle of San Pasqual. To be exact, the Battalion arrived on January 29, 1847.

Word of the recent battle was told the Mormons while in the vicinity of the battlegrounds. The Mormons saw the charred remnants of the burned baggage, the dead horses, the broken lances and the smashed rifles, and the sight as much as anything influenced them to put in at San Diego for its possible defense rather than continue to the pueblo of Los Angeles.

The men of the Battalion were under arms for the United States Army. They had been recruited for the army by their elders, who by this gesture hoped to offset the prevailing opinion that Mormons were enemies of the United States and were trying to overthrow the government. Absurd as this may seem now, one can have some idea of how seriously the "threat" was considered at that time when even Frémont looked with horror—or at least pretended to look with horror—on the coming of the Mormons to California. But then he seems to have been making a political game of being frightened by dangers which did not exist. In the same manner by which he had tried to make enemies of the Californians, who, in turn, were doing their best to make friends with him, now he wanted the Mormons, on reaching San Diego, to be considered enemies, too.

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Frémont and Kearny were continuing to conduct their own political war between themselves for "possession" of California, a political war which ultimately resulted in the ambitious Frémont being court-martialed. Though he was acquitted, nothing seemed quite right about the whole business. The political war was a three-sided war, actually, with Commodore Stockton of the navy being in on it, but more from the side lines as referee.

Into the face of this melee plodded the Mormons.

After their terrible march of some fifteen hundred miles and more over a trail of their own making, they might have had a hostile reception in San Diego except for one thing: they minded their own business. Also, the Mormon soldiers conducted themselves so much better than the other American soldiers already there that even General Kearny lauded the new soldiers and praised them publicly.

Frémont, though, screamed about the morals of the Mormon soldiery and did all he could to have them hated. But he was ranting into a vacuum as regards morals. For the main regret of the Mormon soldiers was the fact that some of their families had been left behind during the hard march. But the army pay, little as it was, was reverted directly to the families. Even the pay of the unmarried youths in the Battalion was also sent back to the settlements in the East. Whereupon the Mormon soldiers, for their keep while in San Diego, did the unthinkable for soldiers: they hired themselves out as laborers. They worked.

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They built a bakery in San Diego, they burned bricks, they built log pumps, they dug wells, they did blacksmithing, they repaired carts. In fact the Mormons supplied San Diego with its first touch of being more than a slovenly hole of adobe shacks around which dogs had served for so long as the sole street-cleaning department.

The Mormons made a whitewash and used it all over the tiny harbor town. They got along well with the Indians and surprisingly well with the Californians. And finally they won the full respect and admiration of Kearny's own men, the dragoons. In answer to Frémont's oratory regarding the terrors of the Mormon "menace to the safety and well-being of the United States," these dragoons only laughed.

As true soldiers, the men of the Mormon Battalion on the way across the continent had shown fear of only one thing—army medicine. The commander assigned to the Battalion by the United States Army was not a Mormon. Nor was the surgeon. He was called by the Battalion a "mineral quack" whose mainstay for all ailments was, according to the Mormons, doses of calomel and arsenic. Opposed to all this was the last instruction of Brigham Young prior to the departure: "If you are sick, live by faith, and let surgeons' medicine alone if you want to live."

Today, in glancing through the diaries and the few Mormon books regarding this wilderness trek from the Missouri to San Diego, one will find that the biggest

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hardships recorded about the journey are those dealing with the taking of medicine from the army surgeon.

Because one of the sick men died after taking a forced dose of the surgeon's medicine, the rest of the Battalion felt certain that the surgeon was in league with others in the United States who would have liked to see all the Mormons destroyed:

It was customary every morning for the sick to be marched to the tune of "Jim along Joe" to the doctor's quarters, and take their portion from the same old iron spoon, and the doctor threatened with an oath to cut the throat of any man who would administer any medicine without his orders. I had to take them, but to neutralize their effect I drank a large quantity of water against the doctor's orders. Alva Phelps was suffering severely. The doctor prepared his dose and ordered him to take it, which he declined doing, whereupon the doctor with horrid oaths forced it down him with the old rusty spoon. A few hours later he died, and the general feeling was that the doctor had killed him. Many boldly expressed the opinion that it was a case of premeditated murder. When we consider the many murder threats previously made, the conclusion is by no means far-fetched. . . .

In this fashion the diary accounts of that great march are so full of the bristling feud between the Mormons and the surgeon that everything else is pictured as second-rate danger, including the battle with a herd of wild bulls, a battle which resulted in injuries to several men.

This taking of medicine also overshadows in the accounts the threatened massacre by Mexicans at the garrison of

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Tucson, and likewise all the dangers faced when the Battalion, on swinging south, passed through the very heart of the Apache country and even down into the Yaqui country of Sonora, Mexico. The Mormons were lost down there, their guides taking them deeper into Mexico and farther and farther from California.

Finally the commander, not a Mormon, said: "I'll be damned if I'll go around the world to reach California." So he turned sharply to the right, much to the relief of the Battalion. The Mormons regarded his decision, though, as an answer to their prayers for "divine interposition."

They had enlisted under the belief they would have to fight Californian-Mexicans, Frémont's reports back to Washington having been so filled with the bloody treachery of the Californians. These stories by Frémont had received a big play in the East, one reason being that he was out for the presidential nomination.

The government, not realizing that Frémont's reports were exaggerated, had made an agreement with the Mormons for the colonization of California. With the government, it was the case of getting any Americans as a body into California before too late. But when the Mormons agreed to the plan, the government sidestepped to the extent of using only the Mormons' contribution of young men as soldiers and leaving the families at home.

The dickering continued until, finally, the Mormons were allowed to take "some" families, but not all of them. Yet by the time the Battalion reached San Diego, after such

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a journey, the expedition consisted almost exclusively of soldiers. And they had fully expected to fight. But there was no fight—except verbal ones with Frémont, the indirect cause of their coming. He now needed a “danger” so desperately that he substituted the Mormons for the Californians as the “danger” in California, and that is how it went.

But the Battalion, having done so well in San Diego, was not kept exclusively in the harbor town but was shuffled up and down the coast. The people of San Diego, though, asked for a company to be returned to the harbor for the harbor’s own welfare. So in time a Mormon company was returned to San Diego, a company of seventy-eight under command of Captain Jesse D. Hunter. All of which is made the more significant because of another item—a baby.

A son was born to Mr and Mrs Hunter while in San Diego, thereby becoming the first child born in San Diego whose parents were both Americans.

Every town, presumably, must have some such “first,” and this is it. The boy was named after the town: Diego Hunter.

As for the abandoned coal pits on Point Loma, nobody pays much attention to them these days. And any month now they may have a house or something built over them.

**T**HE OLD FORGOTTEN whalers' spring, when finally we did find it, could have been a mud puddle, except that bits of a broken cask stuck up out of the mud, and some rotten barrel staves, all covered with sharp vines. But this forgotten spring, where the San Diego whalers used to get their water, was not hidden in what could be called an abandoned wilderness. Rather, it had lain hidden in one corner of one of the world's liveliest aviation bases—North Island.

There is evidence too that this spring is hundreds of years older than the city of San Diego. There is evidence that this is the little spring which furnished the first drinking water for the scurvy-ridden sailors of Vizcaíno (1602). Not that it makes much difference now, but it did make a difference then, and he mentioned obtaining spring



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water from a low, flat sandy land just east of the channel entrance. This would have had to be what is now North Island, there being only one channel entrance and only one "low, flat sandy land just east" of it.

San Diego being at heart a remodeled desert country, a lone spring is a spring, and its whereabouts is worthy of being handed down from ship to ship, from sailor to sailor, from generation to generation, from one whaler to the next whaler.

A portion of the harbor's story, then, could be told around this spring, diminutive though it is, forgotten though it was—during the past decades.

The San Diego whalers, for their water, were apparently not inclined to go the additional ten or twelve miles from the harbor's entrance to the mouth of the San Diego River.

Whaling became San Diego's first major important business immediately after the American occupancy, and it continued up to years within the memory of San Diego's present old-timers. The whaling station was remarkably close to the old hide houses of Dana's time. But instead of the San Diego whalers going far afield for their whales, the whales of these waters came to the whalers. It was all quite convenient. The waters then, as now, formed a peculiar junction point for the mammals as they moved south during the first two months of the year and north during March and April. Besides, the bay had served since time immemorial as a whales' maternity hospital.

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The whaling here was done in small boats, first with lances and later with bomb lances, and so close to home that the main diversion of the town was watching these whalers at work. Of a Sunday afternoon picnics would be held on the tip of Point Loma the better to watch the whales being chased and fought, then towed to the trying works inside the harbor on Ballast Point.

Two iron pots with a capacity of 150 gallons each received the pieces of cut-up whale, and men with huge strainers stood by to drag out the pieces of blubber the moment they became the proper brown. The oil was extracted from these pieces by pressing and was poured into casts for cooling, storing and shipping. Whatever else was left of the whale was burned. All of which gave Ballast Point and even the entire bay shore there (because of the hide houses near by) a reputation that lingers to this day.

This was the era when the spring on North Island was at the height of its importance. The shore people of the whaling station would cross the channel and fill their buckets from the spring and hang around to talk. It was the meeting place, in a way the village post office. And the whalers filled their casks from the same spring. The village of Point Loma was a world of its own, and the distant town by the river bed another.

And sometimes the female whales coming into the harbor to have their young would be so thick in the channel

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that the men in the rowboats would have to wait the passage of a school before daring to venture across to North Island and to the spring. Even during our own time here whales, as if from old habit, have entered the harbor and have blown around. Some of these whales are old enough, no doubt, to have been born in this harbor during the time of the Spaniards. Yet what a homecoming for these whales to see their old birthplace now refilled with warships!

As an example of this convenient short-cut method in whaling operations, San Diego's harbor of the old days has today a living counterpart of itself in an unpopulated harbor on the Mexican coast. Boatmen for the fun of it frequently go down there merely to see how San Diego must have appeared before it became San Diego.

The Lower California harbor is Scammon's Lagoon, perhaps two hundred miles south. The entrance to Scammon's Lagoon is much narrower than that to San Diego and has less than three fathoms depth across the bay and is more difficult to find. But it was entered by an English whaler captain who attracted attention by returning to England with full cargoes of oil and little sign of battle. His boats and rigging showed no scars of hard usage. His crew returned from each cruise plump and happy, a condition which could not possibly have been due to the customary fare on whalers—salt beef and hardtack.

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The whaler's fortunate cruises created so much gossip that other whalers followed him, finally trailing him to this bay in Lower California. And the bay, like San Diego's, was a favorite place for the whales to have their young.

So the whaler captain instead of killing his whales outside the harbor and butchering them aboard ship, killed them inside the harbor and had the carcasses dragged ashore. This spared the vessel from all the untidiness customary with whalers; it remained fresh, and so did the crew.

Instead of living aboard ship exclusively and eating ship's fare, the men could go ashore and hunt. Though Scammon's Lagoon is surrounded by gigantic sand dunes, desert game could be found, and also an abundance of turtles and ducks. The men had a great time of it and grew fat.

Of course when the other whalers caught onto the trick, the lagoon became fairly exhausted of whales, but not completely. Some whales still have their young there, and the shores surrounding Scammon's Lagoon remain the same wild sweeps of desert wilderness. This is why voyagers from San Diego find a fascination in putting into the lagoon just to see how San Diego's harbor—minus the sand sweeps—formerly appeared in the raw, both bays being twins in size and shape.

But North Island, prior to habitation, must have appeared as a desert waste too, with sand dunes around the

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ridges. For the sand dunes around the ridges are still there on the ocean side and the channel side. Behind these sand dunes and concealed within a wild acreage of mesquite, sage and briars is where the North Island flier and I finally refound the ancient spring.

We did not know exactly why the rediscovery should have seemed so important to us except that, in the search, we had torn our trousers in the thorny brush and had scratched our wrists. Besides, we should not have been absent so long from North Island's aviation headquarters. We had desperately needed some sort of reward to justify our absence and our scratches.

The fact that the old spring should have remained hidden so long on North Island is not such a mystery when one realizes that North Island has these many years been strictly a government-owned and government-guarded piece of property. People do not just go wandering around there without permission. Also, the hundreds of fliers stationed on North Island are too occupied making a history of their own rather than meandering around on foot rechecking, if possible, the old.

But aside from the history of this silly little spring in regard to whalers, it also figures in an old folk story, the folk story from which Bayard Taylor developed his lengthy poem, "The Fight of the Paso del Mar."

Before the spring was known as "Whalers' Spring" it was known as "Russian Well," the spot where a tiny Russian girl, according to legend, was found alive after

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her parents had died near by after being shipwrecked. The tiny spring had saved the girl's life. She was found by a party of Spaniards who had crossed the channel from Point Loma. They named the little Russian "La Loma" for Point Loma. She was adopted by a Spanish family who took her back to Mexico, and her name became Loma Gonzales. When she became a young lady—according to the same familiar folk story—two men fell in love with her. One of them was poor and proud, the other rich and proud. Out of love for the girl a murder was committed by one of them, and he fled to San Diego. The rival pursued. And the two rival lovers, each on horseback, met on Point Loma to fight to the death, the geographical cycle completed. Thus goes the lengthy folk story, and thus goes the lengthy poem, "The Fight of the Paso del Mar."

We searched at least an hour for this forgotten spring without finding a trace of it. We smoked, then hunted again, and again were ready to give up and to consider the spring gone and lost forever. From old records we had figured out the general locality. But our enthusiasm was not of the life-and-death variety. We were ready to give up for good when we sighted a diminutive tunnel through the brush—a tiny tunnel made by small animals. We saw quail tracks also. Within this desert brush animals and birds must have been frequenting this spot for water. We cracked through and over the tunnel, and there was the little spring, the little mud puddle. And our excitement was

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such that one would have thought we had been marooned and were dying of thirst.

We tasted the water. It was fresh.

We returned to headquarters with our report, and our historical eloquence must have got the best of us, for the commander of the flying base became interested, so interested that he detailed a working party of prisoners to dig out the spring and reline it with cement and boards for—presumably—posterity. The prisoners while digging discovered the fossil bones of a million-year-old whale (or of the Pleistocene era, according to the local Museum of Natural History). So we, the two rediscoverers, returned to the spring to have another look, our second and our last. The afternoon was brutally hot, and as we were standing there one of the prisoners with a shovel moved close enough to whisper: “Howdy, Mr Roy Chapman Andrews. Hope to hell you’re satisfied.”

Yet this little spring, “Whalers’ Spring,” alias “Russian Well,” alias Vizcaíno’s spring of 1602, remains one more evidence of how this harbor shore line is so freakishly generous with holdovers from the past. For the city, not being a factory city, has had a habit of building away from the past instead of over it. The habit certainly is not intentional, but it just so happens. The first settlement of what is now Old Town still retains, as by accident, some of its old adobes. The new city, the city of the present, was started elsewhere on the bay. Even Mission Valley with the old mission is still Mission Valley with the old

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mission. And so history here (although the repetition has become a refrain) is still remarkably easy even for those of us who do not care for history very much.

Unless we can see it.

Unless it comes up at us like "Whalers' Spring" out of a smothering of briery brush.



**I**F THIS HARBOR, past and present, resembles a hotel lobby in which the desk clerk should be another Methuselah, then the name of at least one Indian, Antonio Garra, deserves to go down in the register. He is the one Indian who impressed himself on San Diego after the American occupancy. No statue of him is in the harbor city, and likely never will be. Yet if one were to be erected it should show him, not scowling, but laughing. For such is the way he died to the confusion of everybody that January afternoon of 1852.

Besides, Garra quoted Latin better than the priest who unsuccessfully presided at the execution.

Of course the only way an Indian might have a statue erected for him, or a bay inlet or a vessel named for him, is to have turned traitor to his own kind and joined

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the whites somehow. So Garra naturally is clearly out of it. For he was the one chief in these parts who tried to organize the back-country tribes into a rebellion against the slavery which had descended upon them along with the robbery of their best lands. His rebellion was the first organized one and also the last.

The Indian numbers already had been sliced and re-sliced by the time the first Americans reached here. The imported sicknesses, the floggings, the forced labor had given these southern California Indians such a head start towards permanent decadence that today an Indian even in San Diego's back country is quite a rarity. Once in a while we see a ragged group of them come into town from their unnatural reservations. They may come to file some protest in the courthouse about water rights or land rights or grazing rights, and that is about all we see of them. They may be dressed like Mexican workmen, and can easily be mistaken for peons. They seem to have lost their self-respect. When the present San Diego (distinguished from Old Town) was little more than a realtor's dream, the Indians in the outskirts filed a protest with the mayor against the practice of American citizens putting out poisoned meat for the great numbers of stray dogs. Too many Indians, it seems, were dying as the result of eating this meat out of gutters.

But by that time Antonio Garra's grave on the waterfront had become the same as the surrounding foot-packed ground. No marker. No anything. But he is remembered

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haphazardly to this day, not because of his life, but because of the gay suavity of his dying.

In his time the Americans of San Diego had a habit—borrowed from the Californians—of going into the back country and collecting Indian ears. This is the way the Americans answered any tribal protests, and the ears would be brought back to San Diego as trophies. Garra did not like this.

These Americans had allowed the Indians no land of their own, not even a reservation. The first reservation was granted years afterwards, almost forty years afterwards. And the Indians were still being left with the choice of being slaves or being hunted down as coyotes. In retaliation some of them, without leadership, pulled off a few more raids which were not noted for their pleasantness.

One such raid was on the Rancho Jesus Maria, owned by the Ibarra family and near San Ysidro, today a small community close to the American customhouse on the border near Tijuana. An old Indian woman in service on the ranch had warned the Californian owner of a coming attack. But the Indians were held in such disdain as cowards that the ranch owner merely laughed at her. He went on about his work, not so much as bothering to take a gun with him.

The Indians, about a hundred of them, swooped down upon him and three other Californians while they were in the yard. All four ran for the door. But the door was bolted. It had been bolted from the inside by an Indian

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boy of the ranch who presumably was in on the plan. The four Californians, being unarmed, were killed in the dooryard.

The Indians entered the ranch house. They took the clothes off the owner's wife to take back to their squaws. The house then was burned and she, left naked, was obliged to walk towards San Diego for help. Her two daughters were made prisoners by the Indians and were taken away to the hills.

Some of the Indians, when captured afterwards, said the girls married chiefs. Or perhaps, a better way to put it would be to say that the girls were obliged to marry chiefs. Others said that the Indians made such a fuss over the girls that the squaws, becoming jealous, waited till the men left camp, tied the girls to a tree and stoned them to death. But their exact fate remains unestablished, the only certainty being that the girls were not seen by whites again.

Another affair involving the whole little village, Americans and Californians alike, was what could be called the Conspiracy of the Cooks.

A Californian girl, who understood a little Indian language, was in the kitchen late one night when the family's Indian cook was talking with a few Indian cooks from other families. The brunt of the conversation, according to what the girl said she overheard, was that the cooks were to supply information to a spy from outlying tribes relative to the most opportune time for a mass attack upon



*Photograph by L. J. Geddes*

### RANCHO JESUS MARÍA

Scene of the abduction of the Ybarra girls by the Indians in 1837 (after the secularization of the missions).



*Photograph by L. J. Geddes*

### RANCHO SANTA MARÍA DE LAS PENASQUITAS

First private ranch in San Diego County, built in 1824 by Captain Ruiz, still used as a cattle ranch. Oldest remaining adobe in county.



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San Diego. The cooks were to give such information as when the families would or would not be at home and the time of day or night when an attack would be most successful.

The girl, after supposedly hearing all this, left the kitchen and told her parents. They immediately told the other families. The result was that each family lassoed its respective cook next morning at dawn.

In this manner ten cooks in all were made prisoners and were marched to an open grave close to the bay. A priest already was waiting there to administer the rites of the Church. The cooks one by one were compelled to kneel beside the grave in prayer and to ask forgiveness. Each then was shot in turn, and each toppled over into the one big grave.

The executioners next rode to the spot out of town where the cooks supposedly were to have met the Indian spy from the back-country tribes. An Indian was found in the vicinity. He may not have been the right Indian, or again the conspiracy may have been in the imagination of the girl. For this lone Indian refused to confess to any conspiracy. So the men cut off his left ear. He was told that, if he did not confess, his other ear would be cut off. He refused to confess. So the other ear was cut off. He was told he would be mutilated bit by bit in this manner until he did confess. But when they started cutting into him he suggested that they shoot him instead, nor did he

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want the final service of their priest. And so he was shot "without first being converted."

San Diego for a time, then, was without cooks. The villagers rested easier until word came from the back country of a new chief in the hills named Antonio Garra. He still had his ears and—so he said—he wanted to keep them. The tribes of his vicinity included the Indian remnants, and he was doing his best to unite them.

In the center of their hill country was the American-owned Warner's Ranch, the residence of John J. Warner, state senator at the time. The Indians objected to the fact that the American ranchers were now claiming as their own the hot springs near by. These hot springs had long been a ceremonial and medicinal camping ground of the Indians, and they wanted to keep them as such.

But now the Indians had been driven away (and have been driven away to this day) and that was one item.

The second item was the fact that the first sheriff of San Diego County, Agostin Haraszthy, decided that the Americans not only had a right to take what Indian land they pleased but also that the Indians themselves should be compelled to pay taxes on whatever possessions remained. In his efforts to collect these taxes (a new word to the Indians) the sheriff was confronted by the objections of Antonio Garra.

As a result Garra was described back in San Diego as being a savage who would be better dead than alive, and the hunt was on.



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Garra was further handicapped by the presence of a renegade sailor off a whaler in San Diego. This sailor, hailing from Providence, R.I., had gone native by marrying the daughter of a chief. The sailor was Bill Marshall, and to take out his dislike of his former skipper he had a habit of wanting to annoy every American, every Californian and every Mexican who came wandering into the back country.

Bill Marshall and his immediate Indian friends annoyed the travelers by shooting at them. But Marshall's gang was captured. The Indians in the gang were shot without ceremony there in the back country, but the sailor was brought back to San Diego for trial. Everybody testified against him, including his Indian father-in-law and his Indian mother-in-law. An Indian boy who did not testify in the manner demanded of him, being too much of a child to know better, was given twenty-five lashes. And Bill himself was driven in a wagon out to the Catholic cemetery. A scaffold was erected while the wagon waited. A rope was attached to Bill Marshall and to the scaffold, and the wagon drove on.

But with the passing of Bill Marshall all his past crimes were now passed on as having been the crimes of Antonio Garra. Warner's Ranch had been raided and burned, and Marshall was believed to have assisted in the butchery of the four Americans surprised there while asleep. Colonel Warner himself had escaped to give the alarm and then had returned to drive away the attackers.

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Though Garra did not take part in the raid, he was now held responsible because of his efforts to unite the Indians. He was captured through the trickery of a Cahuilla chief who, posing as Garra's friend, invited him to a tribal conference and then had him seized, bound and brought to San Diego.

The court-martial did not last long. First Garra was accused of murder. This could not be proved. The embarrassed officials quickly shifted the charge to theft. This could not be proved. Finally the court-martial settled on the charge of treason. The officials made this charge hold because of the evidence that Garra had not paid taxes to San Diego County.

The firing squad assembled at four-thirty that same afternoon in front of Garra's cell, and each member took turns informing the chief that he was about to die.

Garra answered that they were not telling him anything, he knew it.

The priest berated Garra for not behaving seriously enough for a man about to be shot. What Garra should do, the priest said, was pray.

Garra answered: "What is the use? I am nothing. You are nothing. This is nothing." He turned to the firing squad and asked the members to guide him to where he should stand.

The procession started towards the open grave. Garra wanted to lead the procession, but the priest said such an attitude of indifference was unbecoming.

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Garra said he did not see why. The answer annoyed the priest. He halted the procession, turned on Garra and announced: "I insist on you being solemn. You will kneel with me and listen to me while I pray."

Garra laughed: "To please you, I will listen, but I will not kneel."

The priest knelt and chanted, but in his confusion he mixed his Latin metaphors.

Garra, still standing, corrected the priest: "Pardon me, but this is the way you should say what you are saying."

When a boy, the Indian had attended the San Diego Mission briefly. The perplexed Father arose and tried to collect his bearings. But the argument about Latin continued between him and Garra until the grave was reached.

The priest, in a final appeal to Garra to save the solemnity of the situation, begged: "You will now ask the pardon of the people assembled."

Garra, the rifles aimed on him, grinned his acceptance: "Yes, gentlemen, I ask your pardon for all my offenses, and expect yours in return."

With that the rifle balls struck him. He fell and he died, but nobody in San Diego felt quite happy about it the rest of the day, or the next, or the next—or even up till now.

**J**OHN JUDSON AMES, San Diego's first editor, was upset in his canoe in the Chagres River while trying to cross the Isthmus of Panama with his press and type in 1851. He had bought his press and boxes of type in New Orleans and had accompanied them on the vessel south-bound. He had tried to get the heavy equipment across the Isthmus both by muleback and by canoe, but the canoe gave way under the weight. The casting weighed more than four hundred pounds. The native boatmen tried for a day to hoist the load up out of the shallow river, but failed. Ames, who stood six feet six, became disgusted with their efforts. He jumped into the river and tugged at the casting until it came up. He then heaved the casting into another canoe, a bigger one, the amazed natives helping—and so today in the holy of holies of the San

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Diego Public Library is a complete newspaper file of San Diego's life during the period of Californian-American transition.

For Ames arrived just after San Diego along with the rest of California had been annexed from Mexico, and when the aftermath of the Battle of San Pasqual was still a daily topic. These preserved issues of the *San Diego Herald* cover almost a decade, and the writings in them are not only funny, but sometimes smart and sometimes brilliant—except for a tendency to put the heavy pedal on puns.

In an effort to establish themselves as town wits, or as legendary figures, a good many men today, as we know, have dedicated their lives to talk and their money to bars. But nothing happens. And the men fade from memory with their own passing.

We may not know the freak-of-nature secret, then, of how legendary beings get that way. But we do know that San Diego has two of them who have stood the weathering of ninety years. Editor Ames is one, and his running mate, George H. Derby, is the other. And why? Because their activities are still being quoted or described around town as if they lived today.

These two—Ames and Derby—have been remembered with more revered admiration than has been given out to all the Indian hunters, all the generals, all the commodores, all the more or less ferocious personages who paraded the village during identically the same time.

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The reason may be simple. It may be that the harbor of severe faces was so shocked by the sudden appearance of two intelligent Americans who could laugh at the town as well as at themselves that the town could not, and has not, recovered from that first wild outburst of novelty—ninety years ago. One can put down the reason to little else. For, though Ames was a tough free soul with his six feet six, there have been tougher souls in San Diego since that time who raised more dynamite and who stayed longer. But they are not legend. And as for George Derby, the teammate, he was the opposite of the editor. Derby was a mild little fellow whose biggest practical joke (disregarding his humorous writing) was played the time somebody's wife got stuck inside a barrel, and he rolled the barrel across the floor with her in it, tearing her dress on the nails. And even this episode has been passed down as an heirloom—because the man who did it was “Derby the humorist.”

He was an army engineer, a lieutenant, sent by the United States government to change the mouth of the San Diego River from the bay proper to what is now False Bay. But, aside from his job perhaps, nothing whatsoever to him was serious, neither politics nor the fact that San Diego and San Francisco were now connected by three steamships, the *Ohio*, *Frémont* and *Goliath*. They were side-wheelers, and San Diego had reason to be proud of them. Yet to Derby (in his own writings in Editor Ames's paper) they merely meant that now Editor Ames

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could get news items worth printing by clipping the San Francisco paper brought to him at uncertain intervals on the irregular vessels. For San Diego had no other news source, the Overland Mail still being something for the future.

But the whole coast line, for that matter, after having been dormant so long, burst into such a new state of being immediately after becoming an United States possession that statesmen attributed the new life to their own statesmanship, politicians said they were responsible, and Yankees said it was all due to Yankee foresight. The truth, of course, was the finding of gold, instantly bringing the stampede of '49.

There must have been irony in this for the Spaniards who had first come to California for gold and for nothing else really. In hopes of finding this gold they had suffered scurvy, they had downed the Indians, they had formed the first routes overland as well as by sea, they had held off all other European nations from taking possession of California. But the Spaniards had found no gold for their pains. Then in came the lucky Americans, and right away, within the first few months of their possession—gold! gold! gold! No wonder Spain lay down and died.

But Ames did not come for gold. He came with the one hope of establishing the first paper in southern California. For, until this stampede of '49 changed everything around so robustly, the coast line of California still remained more closely associated with the Hawaiian

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Islands than with the Eastern seaboard. And the only newspaper reaching California with any regularity had remained the Honolulu *Polynesian*.

Ames would have been the first to establish a paper in southern California, too, but for the upsetting of his canoe, a shipwreck on the Pacific while trying to reach San Diego, and a fire in San Francisco. All of these combined allowed the *Estrella de Los Angeles* to beat him out by twelve days.

As a result of working so hard to hoist his heavy casting out of the Chagres River, Ames caught fever. This fever, along with the delay of the upset, caused him to miss the steamer headed for San Diego from Panama. While waiting in Panama for another vessel he set up what was left of his press and published a paper called the Panama *Herald*. He may, then, be a "first" editor of some sort down there.

He boarded the next vessel out of Panama for California. The vessel sprung a leak off the Gulf of Tehuantepec during one of those ferocious blows there which the fishermen of San Diego still fear. The vessel had to run for cover, but in so doing ran onto a sand bar. The delay cost Ames another two weeks, being just enough of a delay to get him and his press into San Francisco on the eve of San Francisco's first big fire. This fire destroyed more of his printing material.

The vessel, when northward bound, had not touched at San Diego. He now had to have what was left of his printing press lugged back down south again. But he did



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get out his paper, the first issue of the San Diego *Herald* appearing on May 29, 1851.

To San Diego this date is quite important. In fact, it is important to all the societies of southern California which go in for old records and the like, the issues having been so miraculously preserved in bound volumes.

Lieutenant Derby, better remembered around this vicinity by his pen name, "John Phoenix," came into the picture by contributing paragraphs and stories to Ames during off hours while building a dike to head off the river from entering the bay. Derby himself writes the opening interview with himself soon after arriving (1853):

Here I saw Lieut. Derby of the Topographical Engineers, an elderly gentleman of emaciated appearance and serious cast of features. Constant study and unremitting attention to his laborious duties have reduced him almost to a skeleton, but there are not wanting those who say that an unrequited attachment in his earlier days is the cause of his careworn appearance.

He was sent out from Washington some months since "to dam the San Diego River," and he informed me with a deep sigh and melancholy smile, that he had done it (mentally) several times since his arrival.

Such paragraphs as these, then, may be the reason the early Americans of San Diego had the dignity surprised off them by the appearance at last of one army officer who did not consider himself the direct lieutenant of God. For, until Derby's arrival, the only concern most of the officers had with writing was in the preparation of their

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own official documents elaborating their valor and importance and the need of more government funds. Derby must have been a relief to everyone, even to the army officials. Besides, he must have known his engineering as well, for the dike he built is still in use after all these years and is still turning the river into False Bay, today's Mission Bay.

Yet the incident above all others which contributed to making Derby an immortal to San Diego concerns the time Editor Ames had to go to San Francisco on politics and asked Derby to edit the paper during the absence.

The words "on politics" are important to the incident inasmuch as Ames's paper was being subsidized unofficially by a San Francisco senator running for re-election. This is why Ames had to go north. He had to go north to receive instructions about the campaign. During the absence, though, Derby as acting editor twisted the campaign of the San Diego *Herald* exactly around by coming out editorially for the other candidate, the rival.

Derby's editorials continued for six weeks, Ames being unable to return sooner on the steamer *Goliath*. And all the town waited to see what would happen when Ames finally did step off the boat and reach his office.

Derby, aware that the town was waiting to hear details of the encounter, wrote the story for the next edition:

. . . we held Judge Ames down over the press by our nose (which we had inserted between his teeth for the purpose) until we discovered that we had been laboring under a "mis-

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understanding," and through the amicable intervention of the pressman, who thrust a roller between our faces (which gave the whole affair a very different complexion), the matter was finally adjusted on the most friendly terms. . . .

This imaginary fight also became an heirloom of the village, then of the city, and continues to be mentioned as if it had occurred but last week.

So that is how it is. The two are of the town's legends of today. And that is why, perhaps, one should regard with pity anybody who would deliberately set out to duplicate them or to replace them or to be remembered as a wit likewise. They have proven that the throne is too much a freak of nature and cannot be acquired by either intentional plotting or by duration of residence. For Derby was in San Diego less than two years, and Ames less than eight.

Yet their left-over presence can still be seen and felt, and is part of the harbor waters.

Perhaps the truest of characters after all may be somebody who remains unaware that he is a character, but who continues going right on being one just the same. For such was Ames, and such was Derby.

**Y**ANKEE JIM came riding down from the north into Old Town to become San Diego's bandit. He became it by stealing a rowboat and was hanged for doing so.

On the surface Yankee Jim appeared to be an agreeable fellow. But his reputation, unfortunately for him, came riding in ahead of him. For he pretended no dash, he wore no sash, and unlike the black-eyed Joaquín Murietta, Yankee Jim did not go out of his way to be gracious to the ladies.

In fact the opposite was whispered of him, in the north. It was said that instead of being gracious he frequently had angered people by slashing open their stomachs. But all this was hearsay and, if it had taken place at all, it had taken place before he reached the harbor village.

In the village he seemed to do his best to be on friendly

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terms with everybody. He offered Mexican candy to the children, who were ordered by their mothers to refuse it, and he frequently ordered drinks all around. Yet socially he could get nowhere.

Circumstances of the time were against him. A paymaster had gone down to the river to take a bath. He undressed on the shore, but never had the chance to put his clothes back on because while reaching for them he was interrupted by a bullet through his neck. The belt in which he carried his money was taken, and nobody was caught.

Yankee Jim could not be suspected of this act, as he had not arrived in town. But when he did arrive, the feeling was still strong. The citizens figured that he was the type who would have committed the crime himself if he had been there—in time.

Jim lived on with his tobacco and his cups, but was not invited to any of the Old Town dances. Murietta, operating in the north, was wise enough to keep the women on his side, at least the Mexican women. But Yankee Jim lacked grace in his conversation. He did not know how to bow when returning ladies' handkerchiefs, and so the wives urged their husbands to watch him.

The husbands watched and watched, but Jim's life continued aboveboard until one unfortunate day when he had to cross the mouth of the river on an errand. A rowboat was beached on the shore, a sort of community rowboat, and Jim climbed into it and rowed across. He was immediately arrested on the charge of stealing the boat. The

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trial was a triumph for the community, and the verdict of the jury was as follows:

Your jurors in the within case of James Robinson [Yankee Jim's real name] have the honor to return a verdict of guilty and do therefore sentence him to be hanged by the neck until dead.

CAVE J. COURTS, *Foreman of the jury.*

Jim reminded the court that there was no law in the country against stealing a rowboat, even if he had stolen it.

The court searched through the lawbooks and found that there was no law against stealing a rowboat, at least not in California. The jurors went into a conference over scratching out the word "rowboat" and replacing it with "horse."

So, horse or rowboat, Yankee Jim was taken out to be hanged. He thought the whole thing was a joke. He continued laughing about the joke until the cart was driven from beneath him.

And, as a result, he has gone down as San Diego's bandit, and the local schoolboys know of him. For, as regards big-time banditry, San Diego, following the Gold Stampede, was left hopelessly out on the fringe. San Diego had no gold, and therefore no gold to steal. In fact for a time, San Diego did not have much of anything, including citizens. The gold fields of the north drew everybody, even the bad men. But because San Francisco had a Vigilance Committee, the few persons who remained in San Diego felt

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that they should have a Vigilance Committee. And now, having a Vigilance Committee, the next thing was to find somebody to hang. That is, somebody besides Indians. Yankee Jim seems to have been the answer.

The town's worst characters, oddly, were not qualified for hanging. They had been sent down by San Francisco as State Volunteers for the "protection of San Diego against Indians." This was immediately after the Antonio Garra episode.

These Volunteers, numbering fifty, came by vessel supposedly to fight Indians but actually to live off the town. They had been organized in San Francisco by the governor's sanction. But when told before sailing that the Indian trouble in San Diego was all over and ended, they insisted on coming regardless. For San Francisco, with its Vigilance Committee, was becoming too dangerous for most of them.

They arrived in San Diego, a snarling lot of outcasts who, now for the first time in their lives, had state authority behind them. They used it by commandeering the citizens' best horses and everything else they wanted, from food to women.

San Diego became sick of the Volunteers within an hour of their arrival but could do nothing about them. They insisted on staying, and they established their own unorthodox camp next to the dry river bed of Mission Valley. They stole clothes, they demanded salutes, they rode the town's finest mounts, they stayed drunk by day and by

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night, and the best the governor could do was to retract their authority officially.

But they outnumbered the town's inhabitants, who by now would have preferred Antonio Garra and all his tribes. The Volunteers would not leave. The fights between the citizens and the Volunteers started in earnest the day Philip Crosthwaite, a citizen, was wounded badly by a Volunteer. He replied by shooting off the leg of the Volunteer, a chap named Watkins.

The citizens, in desperation, took a long chance by pooling their finances and chartering a vessel and herding the State Volunteers aboard her. And they sailed back for San Francisco with half of San Diego's property.

The town was left bankrupt, so bankrupt that the best the town could do towards constructing another much-needed jail was to build one of cobbles, with no cement. The first prisoner confined in it dug his way out. The next week the first of the winter rains washed away the mortar, the walls crumbled and remained crumbled. This jail relic has remained a marker in Old Town right up till now. Foliage soon grew through the piles of crumbled cobbles to remain there, and usually a goat or two is inside the heap nibbling on greens. Eastern visitors, very Murietta-conscious, generally ask if this old jail relic ever housed any of his band. The question has become proverbial. He and his gang did sweep into Old Town once, and then swept right out again. And that is the limit of his San Diego exploits. To fool their pursuers, the highwaymen galloped



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as far south as San Diego as if heading for Mexico. After hanging around Old Town for an evening, they headed south while everyone in town watched. Then, after the bandits thought the report would be that they had gone to Mexico, the gang double-backed up a canyon for the north again. No, the old jail saw none of them. All during their brief visit, in fact, the little town put on its most courteous behavior.

But the next jail of San Diego was an iron cage five feet by eight feet with a wooden roof and a floor of sheet iron. This jail was easily transportable on skids, and the last record we have of it is that it was taken across the bay to Coronado to be used during the early part of our generation at a seaside resort there, Tent City.

As for the first cobblestone jail, the one which crumbled, the town trustees were so disgusted with it that when the building contractor (who also happened to be the city marshal) asked for his payment in full by filing a suit against the trustees, they resigned in a body rather than answer the suit. Besides, the State Volunteers from San Francisco had so depleted the town of earthly goods that the payment for the jail would have had to be made with scrip. This was suggested, but the marshal did not like the idea. The financial affair never has been settled, though it started almost ninety years ago.

But in addition to the stories of Yankee Jim and the hasty gallop of Murietta's gang, San Diego also has a pirate story. This perhaps is fortunate. For no city likes to be

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without its bad men of the past, so long as they remain of the past. And the saying goes that the pirates who for a time made the near-by Coronado Islands their headquarters were a hangover of part of Lafitte's ousted crowd from New Orleans. Maybe so. Maybe not. But the leader at the Coronados was José Arvaez, his specialty being to hide in wait for vessels from San Francisco bearing gold from the northern gold fields to the East.

The Coronados today are as bleak as ever they were, and resemble burned biscuits. They belong to Mexico and are eighteen miles south-by-west of San Diego's harbor entrance. Few persons ever go there, for the islands have only one fair cove for anchoring, this cove being named Pirates' Cove, as would be expected.

Arvaez stole a schooner out of Mexico and equipped it with arms. With the Coronado Islands as a base, his business of waylaying vessels bound for the Horn from San Francisco was proving profitable. He took no prisoners, and the captured vessels were scuttled. Because of this nobody caught onto his tricks, and for a long time the vessels were merely considered lost at sea by storms. But once he tried for game too big for him. He captured the *Chelsea* of Liverpool. Her passengers for the most part were returning to England with the customary gold from the new gold fields.

Arvaez, so the story goes, had all of them killed except the cabin boy, Tom Bolter. The boy said his greatest ambition was to be a pirate as bold as Arvaez, and he begged

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to be permitted to join the buccaneers. The flattery pleased the vanity of the pirate, and he was also pleased by the fact that the boy said he knew the sailing dates of several other vessels about to put out of San Francisco. Tom, being smart, was allowed as a result to take part in two of the subsequent captures.

But one day Arvaez became disgusted with Tom and would not let him sail on the next raid. Tom Bolter had felt so chesty, now being a pirate and all, that he had quarreled over the small share of loot given him by the leader. Tom felt that he should have been given at least a quarter of it for having named the sailing dates of the vessels. Arvaez answered by slugging him, then had him thrown into a cave on the island of their headquarters to teach him manners. The boy wisely had refrained from revealing all the sailing dates at once, so the leader had thought better not to kill him until all of them were made known. Tom was kept under guard in the cave when Arvaez and his men sailed away from the Coronados for the next San Francisco vessel, the sailing date of which Tom already had given.

Two guards were left ashore. But as soon as Arvaez and the rest of his crew departed, the guards naturally settled down for an easy time of it and told the boy to come outside the cave, where they were sitting. Tom was only too glad to obey, and by the second day he and they were so chummy that all vigilance went overboard.

One of the guards lay down for a noontime siesta, and

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the other seated himself next to the cave's entrance. They fell to talking about women, the guard accusing Tom of knowing nothing about them, he being but a youngster. Tom said he knew all about them, he having been in San Francisco. Then, during the midst of the argument, Tom looked out at the horizon, pretended suddenly to notice something, and picked up the guard's telescope the better to see.

"It's the schooner sure as God," Tom said. "It's our schooner coming back, sure as God."

"Can't be," said the guard. "Can't be. Let me look." He snatched the telescope and stood up, the better to prop it across a big rock. He leaned his rifle against the rock and had his hands free for the telescope. Tom grabbed the rifle and whanged the stock of it upon the guard's head. The guard fell. Tom wheeled around with the rifle and shot the other guard, who was awakening because of the noise. This second guard was killed outright, the firing having been at close range. Tom then returned to the first guard, who was unconscious, and battered his head until he was dead also.

So much for that.

Tom commandeered the yawl which the pirates used on the island for fishing. He filled it with all the valuables it could carry without being swamped, and he rowed for the harbor of San Diego. He rigged up a leg-o'-mutton sail to help him.

He made such a peculiar picture on entering the harbor that the sailors of a Boston vessel, the *Grendo*, at anchor

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off the hide houses, hailed him. They asked who he was. The boy answered that he was a bloody pirate and that there were a lot of others where he came from. He pointed towards the Coronados.

“My, my,” they laughed. “A bloody pirate! Think of that! Then show us your treasures.”

Tom did. And also he told them his story, especially that part of it which emphasized his own bravery.

Word for volunteers was sent ashore from the *Grendo* to the hide houses and to the whaling station on the beach of Point Loma. The volunteers were so many that the *Grendo*, on sailing for the Coronados, carried almost every man on the beach. They landed on the island of the cave (the cave, by the way, is still there), and only enough sailors remained on the *Grendo* to work her out of sight to the lee. To make it appear as if nothing had happened, Tom returned to the entrance of the cave, and another man took the place of the sentry outside.

The pirates in time returned and landed. They suspected nothing until they climbed the cliff to their headquarters. Most of them had left their arms on their vessel so as to be free to lug up the loot. The pirates were so outnumbered by the men off the *Grendo* that the fight was of little duration. Arvaez gave himself up to Captain Belleu of the *Grendo*, and the prisoners were bound and taken aboard.

The *Grendo's* crew could not wait to reach Point Loma before beginning the hangings, and the pirates were hoisted on the yardarms during the trip to port. Each pirate, be-

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fore going aloft, expressed his opinion of Tom Bolter, and the boy in return expressed his opinion of each pirate.

After being brought to San Diego, the pirates' schooner was sold and the loot divided among the men who had shared in the affair. Tom insisted on being given an extra-big share, and this was granted him. But the wealth subsequently went to the boy's head. He spent his days swaggering around the beach, bragging about his bravery and his riches.

Within a year he became so impossible a pest that the townspeople began saying he might have been one of the pirates, after all, and if so deserved being hanged, too. He admitted having taken part in some of the raids, but excused himself by saying he had been compelled by Arvaez to do so. But the townspeople were not so sure. Their dislike of Tom Bolter increased so much day by day, week by week, month by month, that even he became a bit leary of what they were saying they would like to do to him.

So, the day after Yankee Jim was hanged, the beach had no Tom Bolter, either. He was gone, vanished, and nobody yet knows where or how. The supposition is that he went to Mexico.

THE WORDS "Ramona's Marriage Place" are painted in letters huge and black across the outside walls. The letters glare down upon the former main highway into San Diego from Los Angeles.

The highway still goes by there and by the sign, but the highway no longer is the main highway. Yet busses of today continue making "Ramona's Marriage Place" a definite point of call, allowing the passengers their half-hour or so for strolling through the well-kept patio, for dropping their dimes into the "wishing well," for buying their copies of *Ramona*, for hearing their theatrically illuminated lecture on old missions of California, for looking at an oxcart, for looking at a lot of things, including the desk and chair used (or, at least, so the visitors are told) by Helen Hunt Jackson in her writing of this

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novelized report back to Washington of Indian conditions in California.

For this ancient adobe structure, the former dwelling of the Estudillo family, is certainly one of the principal industries of Old Town today—and has been since 1909, when the San Diego streetcar company, to encourage patronage from the San Diego of today to the Old Town of the beginning, purchased the home from members of the Estudillo descendants and turned it into a museum, a permanent connecting link between the bygone and the present. And we who could be cynical about “Ramona’s Marriage Place” are only so at first.

“Ramona’s Marriage Place” is a game of make-believe that even the patrons enjoy playing, one can be sure. Besides, they receive more than the worth of their dimes. We know that. For the Estudillo home, patio and all, was built in 1827. And if it had not been preserved, what would it be now?

Nor should Helen Hunt Jackson be blamed if, out of a composite of persons around Old Town, she developed such a fictionized character that visitors want to believe that the character was real and that Ramona truly was married at the spot which this sign, huge and black, indicates. Most of us have stopped worrying, and most of us have stopped trying to correct the visitors who ask: “But isn’t it really true?”

Yes, it is very true—as true as that editorial writer’s answer to the little girl’s letter about Santa Claus.



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Nor could Tommy Getz, a former vaudeville trouper who helped recondition the old Estudillo home into "Ramona's Marriage Place"—nor could Tommy Getz really believe his luck when troops of visitors day after day solemnly paid their dimes to enter the establishment. He would confide to the visitors that Ramona and her Alessandro were, after all, the results of a novelist's poetic license. But the confidence was more resented than appreciated. The visitors preferred their dream.

Tommy Getz, a good friend and a good showman, is dead now. But the manner he used through the years in operating "Ramona's Marriage Place" continues much the same. And the place remains one of the harbor's everlasting institutions, the same as the navy, the climate and the tip of Point Loma with its antique lighthouse.

Nobody is hurt, nobody is injured. Furthermore, the dimes of "Ramona's Marriage Place" have helped to keep in employment some of the descendants of the original Mexican and Spanish families who have clung to Old Town right up to now. And the best place in San Diego to buy tortillas is in Old Town, too, there by the river bed and surrounded by a few other adobe dwellings—some of them even older than the Estudillo place. Yes, we would have it so.

For the present San Diego, the San Diego of buildings and business streets and modern residences, was started as a separate town about three miles to the south of the original settlement around the presidio. The present city was

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the artificial result of an unconquerable realtor, Alonzo Erastus Horton. Horton specialized in selling climate and sometimes sold it as high as ten thousand dollars a lot. Anyway, the present San Diego has little of the original San Diego, Old Town, which like a cast-off grandparent has been allowed to sleep away its lingering days beside the junction of Mission Valley and the bay.

But there are a few in Old Town whose memories can reach far back to when Old Town was everything. And there was Louis Serrano.

"An Unexpected Afternoon with Louis Serrano," the meeting could have been called. He was about ninety years old at the time and was sitting on the front steps of his cottage. He still owned a riding horse, a beautiful creature. Though he still could sit a saddle as straight as ever, he had given up riding because the automobiles got in his way. They were in his way that afternoon.

A detour at Old Town was bringing the cars in a constant parade past the pickets of the fence, and none of the drivers of course glanced at the former rancher of the whole place. He sat there regarding them. They seemed to know all there was to know about everything, past, present, future, and could not be bothered with more. That is the way they drove.

Serrano had ten children, but when asked his number of grandchildren he pointed at various homes. "Three there. Four there. Three there. Two up there—No, Rosy, you count them." Rosy was one of the daughters.



*Photograph by L. J. Giddies*

**"RAMONA'S MARRIAGE PLACE"**



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She helped show visitors through "Ramona's Marriage Place."

Serrano was born in Old Town, his grandfather coming to the harbor as an officer in the Spanish company. The families would sell some of their cattle through San Francisco, driving the herds there. Serrano said the trips took him about two months and that he had a good time all the way.

In fact, one received the impression that he had had a good time all the way through everything, including his ninety years. When he fought bulls during the old celebrations in Old Town, there was nothing to hide behind in the arena, he said, and with his fingers he coursed a line along his trousers where the leg had been torn by a horn.

When asked if Old Town had lots of saloons in those days, he answered: "Not so many as now." This was during Prohibition. "There were only nine then." Also, he complained about the present servings. "You pay twenty-five or fifty cents and don't get enough to fill this cavity." He pointed to a tooth. It was his only one.

He broke out a bag of tobacco and a cigarette paper. The paper was a brown-black. He rolled his own in less time than we of today could open a package of ready-mades. He knew he was being watched, too, for he grinned to himself.

He was very wise. He had seen our kind before. We likely would be the type who would ride holding onto the pommel. He had seen dozens of us.

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But these veterans of the Transition Period are fading from Old Town now, as might be expected. One is lucky to have met a Louis Serrano in time.

And there was Father Antonio D. Ubach, too, another of those Methuselah-like beings in whom all history could seem but a matter of his own personal memory. He was the Father Gaspara in the book *Ramona*. He was a friend of Mrs Jackson during her stay in San Diego when she was preparing the novel. He was the working model from which she drew her composite picture of the priest who befriended both Ramona and her Alessandro and who finally married them.

Father Ubach came to San Diego in 1866—but did not die until our present century. That is how old he was, and why he became such a familiar connecting link between the Old Town and the new. He always seemed old, but not aged. And there is a difference. He must have seemed old on his first arrival in 1866, for already he was wearing a beard when he came. He remained bearded throughout his life on the harbor, having been granted a dispensation from the Church to wear the beard.

Father Ubach supplied much information to Mrs Jackson for the book, and in an interview two years before his death he emphasized once again that there was no real Ramona and no real Alessandro. But he did say he could name actual characters whom Mrs Jackson had used in part for her heroine and hero. He said he could give the names but did not care to do so at the time because of the

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unfairness to others who deserved almost equal mention.

Anybody who had been nominated by Father Ubach as "the" Ramona could have made a financial clean-up—the entire United States having gone so Ramona-conscious immediately on the book's publication. As it was, he himself had suffered enough sight-seeing attention through being the Father Gaspara of the novel. People would come to San Diego expressly to gawk at him, or interview him, or tag him around. And he had much work to do, the work of running two churches, one in new San Diego and the other in Old Town.

He was still much alive when "Ramona's Marriage Place" first started to get under way for business. And when asked constantly, as would be expected, if this was where he really had married Ramona and Alessandro, his reply remained:

"If you recall the novel, they were married in the Church. Why, Father Gaspara or any priest would not marry them outside of the Church. Catholics know that. Still, even they keep asking."

But already the tide was setting in; already the visitors from far and away were so desperately anxious to believe that the girl Ramona was real and that she was earnest that all this just naturally took its own course. And so "Ramona's Marriage Place" is the answer.

But one can miss the theatrical touch of Tommy Getz out there now. Perhaps all of us do. For he had entered show life in 1873 as boy soprano in the Kelly and Leon

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minstrels, which may explain a little why his twice-daily lectures on the mission of California were accompanied by the actual tinkling of bells—yes, and by the twinkling of lights. During his years of developing the fame of “Ramona’s Marriage Place” he insisted on action in his show. If at all possible he no doubt would have liked to have at each performance an old mission Indian singing “Ramona” to the accompaniment of tom-toms.

There was the time, too, when a quarter of the wall was torn away from the old adobe kitchen. Being a showman, he had not objected to a rumor that a secret treasure had long been buried in the ancient place by Spaniards. He may not have started the rumor, but he certainly had done nothing to stop it. And he had been so convincing one morning that next day two men arrived from Los Angeles bearing a bag of radium material. The bag was supposed to swing when in the vicinity of precious treasures, and it swung towards the kitchen wall.

“We’ve found it,” the men told Tommy.

With picks they went at the wall as if it were a tooth in need of filling. They worked tirelessly, the wall being a foot thick. At each inch of penetration the bag swung with increased tempo.

The last of the mortar was of stones. When these were lifted out the bag stopped swinging, nor could any urging start it swinging again.

“Um,” one of the men said. “There must be a little metal in the stones. Isn’t that interesting!”



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He was answered with other "ums," making in all about three "ums."

The men departed then, leaving Tommy to contemplate the hole his own convincing talk had caused.

"Cheer up," we said, for we felt obliged to say something to him. "Cheer up. Maybe now you can tell your customers the hole was caused by cannon balls long ago. Maybe it was."

"Say, you know," he answered, thinking hard, "maybe it was."

The afternoon bus began unloading its flock at the gateway just then. Tommy left the kitchen hole to guide the flock into the lecture room, which had for its curtain a monstrous map of the old footpath from San Diego to the Golden Gate.

"Stay around," he begged us. "I've a great act. Stay around and I'll show it to you."

Tagging behind him, we found a bench in the showroom, and he walked with an exaggerated wobble as he crossed the floor.

"I'm not drunk, friends," he told the visitors from off the bus. "I have to walk this way because of the old tiling on the floor. Look how uneven it is. Look how worn down in the center it is. This tile was made in 1770 and is the first work of civilized man in California. Furthermore . . ." The lecture had started.

If ever one wanted to be made sad—while Tommy was still alive—all one had to do was to sit on a bench in that

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dark, cool room, surrounded by darkened paintings and bars, and have him tell about the old friars being obliged to protect themselves by sprinkling broken wineglasses over the walls; or have him recite again the misery of the young Spanish courtiers of old who could not get inside the girl's house until they were engaged. . . .

"How'd you like my act?" he whispered to us, his friends, when it was all over and we were once more in the sunshine where friars did not sprinkle their walls with broken wineglasses. "Pretty good, eh?"

"Yes." We meant it, as everyone meant it, once they heard him.

And his wishing well in the patio!

"Quaff ye the Waters of Ramona's Well," suggested (and still suggests) an inscription carved in wood. On the bottom of the well were abalone shells and pieces of what appeared to be broken tiling and dimes. During racing season at the former Tijuana track, fans from Los Angeles would stop at "Ramona's Marriage Place" on their way to the races. They would stop at the well, and the wishes they made concerned the galloping health of such mounts of that day as Hydromel, Ervast and Golden Prince. But Tommy had a cheerful story about the well not concerned with commerce. One morning early he saw an old Spanish mother kneeling there. He asked her what could be the nature of her wish that she should be there so early. "I'm wishing," she answered, "that everybody in the world could be as happy as I am today."

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“Ramona’s Marriage Place” was in its greatest glory, perhaps, when the main highway from Los Angeles passed by there before the present cut-off was built. Those were the days when the original Tijuana track, and later the Agua Caliente track, and also Prohibition, caused a river of cars to flow constantly by the place en route to Mexico during week ends and holidays.

Tommy said that during that period the biggest recorded attendance at “Ramona’s Marriage Place” was on a Labor Day when 1,632 persons dropped their dimes. This may help to indicate how Ramona and all thoughts about Ramona have become a San Diego institution. One cannot explain why the name still means so much to visitors from everywhere, but it does.

Tommy also said the worst day was the day of a cloudburst when only one woman succeeded in driving her car to the place. She insisted on going the entire rounds, including Tommy’s full-length lecture on the missions of California. He delivered the full talk to her, along with the tinkling and the twinkling and his own exaggerated wobble across the floor tiles. And later, when he went to collect the day’s receipts from the box at the door, there was none. She had picked up her dime as she went out.

WHAT HE LACKED was boisterousness.

He should have swept through the streets just once in a coach-and-four, drinking champagne and throwing orchids at the window of a touring Lillian Russell, say. Had he done this—just once—the city of San Diego of today would have more to work with on his name.

After all, he is the one who started today's city from scratch, who planned the streets, who built the first buildings, who got the first outsiders to come here and buy—not whale oil or hides, but home lots.

As a business gambler and a plunger he was by all odds our biggest and our best. But always he won. Yet in the winning he did not call all hands to the bar to celebrate. And this may be one of the reasons we of today rather pass him over—our biggest man.

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It is strange.

· He lived to be deep into his nineties, which means that he overlapped so far into the city's present generation that many of his competitors, than whom he was sharper, are still very much alive and still very much in business. And this too, as we know, has considerable to do with how any man is remembered.

“Yes, but he made a fortune by starting San Diego.” This remains the proverbial remark concerning him. Such an estimate is difficult for the construction of any monument. Maybe after twenty or thirty more years the estimate will gradually wear off and the little stories about him will grow into big, warmer ones. By then he may not be so readily pictured as he is today, Connecticut-born, business-sharp, a canny gambler.

Also, so far as concerns San Diego, he is not only the father of the present city but he is likewise the father of that peculiar merchandise—climate. He is the one who first started it going and the one who first sold it. The year was 1867.

When he, a stranger, came into the harbor in that year the present San Diego was a waterless mesa of cacti and chaparral and sage. One structure only stood upon the land, but this structure had long been abandoned, and two of the walls had been torn down. The surrounding miles were a desert.

Even Old Town, about three miles to the north, had decayed into such a sleepy sleep that scarcely a soul was

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around. Editor Ames long ago had given up the newspaper fight and had gone. The few hangers-on lived on their ranches most of the time. The Gold Rush of the San Francisco region, a half-thousand miles away, had drained from the harbor every soul with ambition.

The harbor, so accustomed to long siestas, was now prepared to take another one.

Enter: Alonzo Erastus Horton. But even he did not know why he came, for he already was fifty-four years old. Nor did he have much money. The steamer *Pacific* dropped him off onto the nearest beach and left him. The old hide houses of Point Loma were deserted and decayed. The old fort was deserted, too. He walked into Old Town.

A man was sleeping on a porch. He was the only man in sight. Horton nudged him, awakening him.

"Is this the San Diego I heard about?" Horton asked.

"Sure," the man yawned. "Sure. This is San Diego. Or what's left of it. What do you think of it?"

"I wouldn't give you five dollars for a deed to the whole of it—I wouldn't take it as a gift. It doesn't lie right."

"So? Then where do you think the town ought to be?"

Horton pointed towards the south: "Down that way a few miles. Is there any land there for sale?"

"Sure. Guess so. Why not? You can buy property there by having it put up and sold at auction."

Silence.

The man again: "If you're not just joking, you could go speak to Mr Pendleton. Better speak to him. He's the

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county clerk and clerk of the court. He can call an election for the auction.”

Pendleton was sitting in the plaza. Horton walked over and said: “I came down here to buy some land and help you build up a town, but I find I can’t do anything legally till you trustees hold an election for an auction.”

Pendleton answered: “I shan’t do it, sir. The town owes me enough already.”

“Mr Pendleton, how much would it cost for you to call an election so I can buy some land?”

“It ’ll cost no less than five dollars.”

Horton reached in his pocket, took out ten dollars and said: “Here’s ten dollars, now call the election.”

The county clerk wrote three notices and put them up that night, and that was the start of today’s San Diego.

The notices had to remain posted ten days before the election could be held. During the intervening Sunday Horton went to the Catholic church service in Old Town. He noticed, when the plate was passed around, that the contributions were all ten cents or less. Horton had five dollars left in his pocket. He put it all in the plate.

The donation attracted so much attention that even Father Ubach noticed it. After the service he talked with Horton and asked if he was a Catholic. Horton answered, “No.” Father Ubach asked him what church he belonged to. He answered, “None.” Father Ubach then asked him why he had come to the harbor. He answered, “To buy some land and start a city.”

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But before he could buy some land, Horton explained to the priest, an election of trustees would have to be held. Or, at least, so he had been told, Horton quickly added.

Father Ubach said: "You can name whatever trustees you want elected. Name them."

With Father Ubach's help Horton suggested the few men around Old Town who could serve as trustees. Each was elected, with no competition.

During the auction Horton bought all the land he wanted for twenty-five cents an acre. He obtained from San Francisco the little money required for the purchase, and his next job was to sell it again.

The site he had selected for San Diego had no water, no anything, and was miles from the river bed. But he divided it up and sold it—most of it within two years—and netted more than a million dollars.

How?

The answer would require its own volume on bold salesmanship. Furthermore, he would be the only one qualified to write it. He built some structures close to the waterfront to break the bleakness. He had the structures whitewashed on the north and west sides, the sides facing any incoming vessels. He would be generous with forty dollars to a newcomer, just as he had been generous with five dollars in the collection plate. But the forty dollars would net him four hundred. Somehow he could not miss. Whenever he would be accused of bluffing, he would prove his words. He would prove them one better and



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make the other man feel the fool. He was a gambler, but a Connecticut-born gambler. He always seemed to know what cards to expect and how to play them hard. And all he had in the deck was that same old word—"climate."

He blazed the word up and down the coast, and the name "San Diego." He made people believe that, if they could not buy It—whatever it was—now, they never could buy it. He had no factories to promise and no mines. He had no timber and no speakable drinking water. He had no jobs to offer and no farms. Not on that comparatively high mesa. For farms would require water, too. And irrigation as yet was undreamable. The mesa was not the old Mission Valley of the padres.

But the present San Diego, which had started with nobody, had a population of more than two thousand by the end of two years.

And that was the first boom.

The second boom, almost equally as weird and equally as brief, came twenty years later. And again the only item for sale was climate. But this intangible item brought to San Diego—within two years—a besieging army of 45,000 land-mad, money-mad, talk-mad, climate-buying and climate-selling human beings, half of whom behaved as outright lunatics. Cactus-covered acres which previously had been bought by Horton for twenty-five cents were now sold for \$10,000, then resold next day for \$40,000.

The crowds at the land sales were entertained by clowns, by acrobats, by brass bands, by professional

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women from the Barbary Coast. Battalions of speculators daily poured into the town from the East, the North and from the Middle West. Or if at first they were not speculators, they immediately became speculators on arriving.

This mystery of humanity may someday be explained by the same man who will explain the mystery of the lemming hordes. The bay was beautiful, but it also was salty. Nor were there any exports to be shipped from it. A ferocious drought (just preceding the second boom) wiped out so much cattle that even this enterprise, the kingpin of the old days, has never been renewed. All the lumber then, as now, had to be brought in by sea.

The one and only railroad to bring the mobs to the land sales was the tedious branch line from San Bernardino, almost a day away. The whole thing has to go down in history, perhaps, as the Climate Rush. And the gambling for dividends on it was, and no mistake, as frenzied as for gold or diamonds. We cannot call those people pioneers, we cannot call them much of anything. But the equally amazing feature, after it was all over in two years, was that at least half the people stayed.

It was plain that they were in fact buying comfort, immunity from snow and slush, from piercing winds and sleet-clad streets, from sultry days and sleepless nights, from thunderstorms, cyclones, malaria, mosquitoes and bedbugs. All of which, in plain language, means that they were buying climate, a business that has been going on now for fifteen years and reached a stage of progress which the world has never

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seen before and of which no wisdom can foresee the end. The proportion of invalids among these settlers was very great.

This paragraph was written and published in 1886. Its author, covering the San Diego stampede, was Theodore S. Van Dyke, who was writing at the time for a national magazine.

So Alonzo Erastus Horton, for a fact, had started something. But if only he had broken down, say for a single afternoon, and been publicly gay about it! If only his Connecticut instincts had allowed him, just once, to whoop up Broadway on a fire truck!

We could talk about him then.

SAN DIEGO, as we may have gathered by now, has been a town of Long Sleeps interspersed with sudden Big Outbursts. And by such items is arranged the harbor's calendar of memories. The case of the *Itata*, a Chilean insurgent transport, is one of the Outbursts.

It all may seem funny now, and perhaps it is funny. But by the time the affair was ended, a portion of San Diego's inhabitants of 1891 had moved their belongings to the hills for safety, American sailors had been killed in Valparaiso, and the United States had almost declared war on Chile.

But that is the way with a port, especially a navy port. Whatever happens, whenever it happens, usually is national news—and occasionally becomes history.

Today, when the navy vessels of San Diego (numbering around 117) depart for their annual war maneuvers, the

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harbor has the appearance of a ghost harbor. The contrast is so sudden. By evening they may all be there, alive with their anchor lights, their shore boats, their signal lights, their ships' bells, and by morning—nothing! It is all gone, an illusion, magic!

During such spells the more experienced local merchants merely suffer in silence. But the newer merchants sigh as if the world had ended for sure and there would be no more money anywhere ever again.

It is time, perhaps, that San Diego should act grownup about such things, but it never seems to do so. Nor does it make much difference. For, after all, the navy's vessels have been putting in and putting out of the harbor a good many years now, longer really than San Diego has been flying the American flag.

The American warship *Cyane*, as we remember, planted the first official American flag in San Diego. And the U.S.S. *Congress*, bearing Commodore Stockton, arrived four months later to revamp the fort into an American port. So, if one cares to go into precise dates regarding the navy's first use of San Diego as a base, he may as well, presumably, start from there.

But even at that he should not be too positive about it.

For a Pacific squadron had been cruising this coast while California was still in possession of Mexico. This United States squadron of eight vessels was jockeying against a similar squadron from England. It was a case of one squadron watching the other, a case of Commodore John D.

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Sloat versus Admiral Sir George F. Seymour, during that delicate period when California was on the teeter-totter of joining some other country, possibly England.

The navy and San Diego have been more or less synonymous, then, since that time so long ago. Nor should this Pacific squadron plying local waters be considered a joke—certainly not for that time—for the squadron included the flagship *Savannah* with fifty-four guns, the *Congress* with sixty guns, the sloops *Cayne*, *Levant*, *Warren*, *Portsmouth* with twenty-four guns each, the schooner *Shark* with twelve guns, and the transport *Erie*.

So the sight of a uniform never has been a novelty in San Diego, nor the observation by visitors: "The town's full of sailors. What's happened? War?"

Yet the time of the *Itata* Affair, for such is the title now given it, was the first time the harbor broke into big-time international headlines relative to her fleet activities. The affair became not only a date in the four-hundred-year-old diary of San Diego but also a date in Pan-American history—and also one more time for San Diego when little rumors into big rumors grew until caravans of furniture were seen leaving the town for the hills beyond gun range.

The *Itata*, an English-built steamer in the South American trade, arrived in San Diego innocently enough. Her papers were in order, she passed for an ordinary merchantman, and all her skipper requested was coal. He was out of it. There seem to have been two captains aboard, one a German, Captain Manzden, the other a Chilean,

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Captain M. Tejada. But the *Itata* actually had been sent to California by the insurgents of Chile to receive a contraband load of five thousand rifles and 2,500,000 cartridges.

The United States had refused aid to the insurgents of Chile during this revolution but had remained friends with the Chilean government. But this load of contraband ammunition and arms was already in storage in San Francisco for the insurgents. And, by the aid of some Americans in on the conspiracy, the load was transferred from shore to an American vessel, the *Robert and Minnie*.

The next problem for the conspirators was to have the huge cargo retransferred to the *Itata*. A rendezvous for this transfer—it would have to be at sea—was appointed for the lee of San Clemente Island. Another Chilean vessel, the insurgent man-of-war *Esmeralda*, had accompanied the *Itata* north as convoy. The *Esmeralda* remained hidden outside of San Diego while the *Itata* went inside, in all seriousness, for coal and coal only before proceeding to the rendezvous. She was out of fuel completely, and she got it.

All might have gone according to schedule had not one of the Americans in charge of the shore end of the conspiracy talked too much. In fact, he came right out and bragged, first in San Francisco, then in San Pedro on his way to San Diego, and finally in San Diego itself.

This resulted in the United States marshal coming to San Diego from Los Angeles to investigate the *Itata* and with the power to seize her. But the local revenue collector naturally felt entitled to be in on the kill likewise. The

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two officials had their own running argument, all of which aided in enlivening the affair for the public.

The captain of the *Itata* applied for clearance papers but was refused. But communication by shore boat was maintained between the *Itata* and the *Robert and Minnie*, still waiting somewhere outside with the cargo. The two quarreling government officials, each in a separate boat, then went outside to locate the *Robert and Minnie* but could not find her.

The *Itata's* captain, having been refused clearance papers, said he would put to sea anyway. And if there should be any difficulty in getting out he would summon the insurgent man-of-war *Esmeralda* into port to help him.

The time of all this was within three years after San Diego's Second Boom, and when the survivors of San Diego were still nervous and shaky from that battle of nerves. The moment was not one for playing pranks on the old people who had just arrived there with their life's savings and their furniture.

Rumors spread throughout San Diego that the *Itata* was swarming with insurgents who had been concealed in her hold, and that her big guns had been brought out of concealment and were ready for action upon the town. No report was too wild to be believed, and the wilder the rumor the more the elderly folks of the city believed it. For they were Middle Westerners mostly, the boom people, and of sea warfare they knew nothing.

From time to time the shore people also saw, not as a



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rumor but a fact, the *Esmeralda* cruising mysteriously beyond the harbor entrance during dawn and twilight. Her size was described as twice her actual size, of course, and she was "long, rakish and fast." As the year was 1891, many citizens are still on the harbor who were there then. But when asked how many of the townspeople packed their belongings into carts and started for the hills, their answer is one of those peculiar evasions: "It is positively true that a third of them did." Or, "It is positively true that only a few of them did, and they were of the kind who do not matter."

Nor does it matter—now. Although the waterfront did receive an enduring character out of the whole affair. He jumped ship off the *Itata* while she was in port, and hence came to be known forevermore as "Itata Bill."

But on with the story.

Permission having been refused the *Itata* to leave port, she left anyway. Some say she carried the United States marshal with her. Others say the Chileans tossed him ashore along with the American guard and the American pilot. But she did make a run for the harbor entrance, and in broad daylight.

The U.S.S. *Charleston* was sent after the *Itata* and overtook her while she was keeping her rendezvous with the *Robert and Minnie* off San Clemente Island. The smuggled arms were already being transferred.

With the approach of the cruiser *Charleston*, the *Itata* broke away from the rendezvous—but with most of the cargo already aboard—and steamed westward. At this

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moment the Chilean man-of-war *Esmeralda* hove in sight. The *Charleston* then went in pursuit of the *Esmeralda* and chased her into Mexican waters.

Nothing could be done with the *Esmeralda* there, and she was left begging the Mexican officials for permission to buy coal in Acapulco. The Mexicans refused, so the crew of the *Esmeralda* took the coal by force.

While this was going on, the cruiser *Charleston* took up the chase of the *Itata* again and found her in Iquique. The verdict today is that the *Charleston* must have been a remarkably slow vessel or else the *Itata* an amazingly fast one for a merchantman. But in an out-and-out race the *Itata* always seemed to be the winner.

But in the harbor of Iquique the *Itata* was cornered, captured and brought back to San Diego—and all to save the Chilean government from taking offense at the United States and to prevent the United States from being accused of furnishing arms to the insurgents.

But the insurgents began winning the revolution. And ultimately they did win it.

This resulted in the United States being so hated, because of the *Itata* seizure, that Americans began finding a hard time of it in Chile. Relations between the two countries were at that tense point just as the U.S.S. *Baltimore* put into Valparaiso—and when the *Baltimore's* captain granted shore liberty to 116 petty officers and men. He could not have timed it better for a free-for-all.

The fights started first between the Chilean sailors and

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the American sailors, then spread out to include all their friends and friends' friends on each side. Revolvers and knives were not omitted. When it was over, Quartermaster Riggin of the *Baltimore* lay dead, any number of his shipmates were wounded, and one of these soon afterwards died.

Now began the avalanche of notes and ultimatums, Washington taking the initiative by accusing the police of Valparaiso of having encouraged the disturbance. The officials of Chile denied this. The officials of Washington insisted on it, and also insisted that an indemnity be paid for the deaths and injuries to the men of the *Baltimore*.

The insistence took the form of an ultimatum.

War was discussed in both countries. Mobs talked about it in Chile, and mobs talked about it in the United States.

But there was no war, Chile finally announcing that the indemnity was ready—\$75,000.

As for the *Itata*, the cause of it all, she remained fast in San Diego the while, from June to October, then was returned.

And so—today—it has all blown over, as most things do when new troubles arise elsewhere to replace the old ones.

**A** LONE MARINE with a rake was doing the best he could with what he had. He had been working there now for a month, he said. The military cemetery was a big place for one man to keep going.

The grass on the graves was as brown as the earth for lack of water. Some Spanish and Mexican soldiers of long ago were buried there too, and some Mexican children. Marines, sailors and soldiers alike are buried there, and sometimes their wives. Some of the tombstones are marked simply: "A United States Soldier." That is how old the place is.

The navy and army branches were trying to keep the cemetery as fit as possible with the finances allotted from Washington. But the period was "between wars"—being ten years ago—and the country was not navy-minded. The hedges were as neatly trimmed as on an estate. But the grass

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was as dead as dead. There was no money available for bringing enough water up so high onto Point Loma.

So the condition of a military cemetery can also serve as a barometer of the conditions of the world. And we of this naval harbor cannot help but notice how the popularity of the officers and men, the popularity of the navy in general, rises and falls, rises and falls, in exact proportion to the rise and fall of the tumultuous conditions on earth. And right now, of course, the navy is most popular indeed.

And right now, again, the cemetery is rich with bright greens and reds and blues.

In the days of the lone marine and his rake—ten years ago—sycamores, gums, eucalypti and pines were doing their best to throw a merciful shade over the poverty-stricken grass to aid in the natural restfulness of that high hillside sloping towards the harbor. But today—yes, water has been made available.

So it goes between those famed cycles of each twenty years. The popularity will fall again and will rise again, fall and rise, till Armageddon perhaps. Yet the navy, always having been a part of San Diego, has worked a psychological influence upon the people of the city. Of this one can feel quite sure. For the constant presence of those floating guns and the constant presence of the uniforms have remained a permanent reminder that anything can happen anywhere, that world peace is a myth, and that we must not be too surprised each time mankind is obliged to lapse back to the jungle.

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The military cemetery on Point Loma also serves as another diary of the harbor, the inscription on the tallest monument there being:

TO THE *Bennington's* DEAD

JULY 21, 1905

For any navy disaster, such as the *Bennington* explosion, is still remembered personally by the whole city as a tragedy to one's own family would be remembered. Elsewhere a navy disaster or accident may be regarded as part of the morning's news, to be read, followed, forgotten. But in San Diego it may have taken one's own neighbor, or one's own relative, or the friend who was out to the house the previous night.

This was the way with the *Bennington*. And this accounts for the huge monument, the largest in San Diego. The lines, simple and forceful, predominate the sky line of the military cemetery and mark the graves of some of those sixty sailors who on that Friday morning either were blown into the bay, or penned between decks, or boiled to death, or burned by steam, or killed by flying metal. The hell endured on the harbor for three days, with the town looking on helplessly. San Diego has not forgotten.

Those three days burned another date into the calendar of the harbor, those three days of wondering if the rescuers could save the powder magazines from the flames. During those three days clouds of steam hung over the wrecked vessel and inside the vessel, blinding all who groped aboard

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to rescue companions and remove the dead. In addition to the sixty sailors killed by the boiler explosion, forty-six others were injured, and injured badly. No, San Diego has not forgotten. For the townspeople of today were the youngsters of that day, and they were down on the waterfront for the three days looking on, and keeping out of the way of the horse-driven ambulances by the pier.

Yet if the *Bennington* remains a burned-in navy date of one variety, the same youngsters within two years were to have another. It was hysterical too, but of a different sort. This was the arrival in 1908 of Admiral Robley D. ("Fighting Bob") Evans with his fleet of sixteen battleships, and San Diego was the first American port of call on the Pacific. Newspaper correspondents arrived from everywhere. The streets dripped with bunting. All homes were open houses. And the fleet released into San Diego sixteen thousand officers and men. Yes, that date is remembered likewise.

Today, of course, San Diego's regular naval population is more than twice that much. The exact figures (at the moment of writing) are 39,140—or almost a third of the navy's entire commissioned and enlisted personnel everywhere.

Such a census naturally fluctuates with the seasons, the conditions, the maneuvers. For the navy, after all, is a floating enterprise, and the men are not sent to San Diego expressly to make their homes there. Many of the officers and men, though, naturally remain after retirement, and

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the government retirement pay is what supports their families and builds their homes.

The census, as given, represents the cold-figure census as announced by the Eleventh Naval District as being the number of officers and men attached only to San Diego naval establishments and to San Diego-based vessels exclusively. The retired enlisted men living in San Diego total more than five thousand and the retired naval officers more than eight hundred.

For a fact, then, the navy is San Diego's principal industry. And it is up to the rest of the two-hundred-thousand-and-some population to judge accordingly—and to judge accordingly relative to taxes, merchandise, jobs and taxes. For a government man the world over is a government man, whether retired or on active duty. And the navy has its own supply depot, with the customary reduced prices, for navy families whether on active duty or retired. This supply depot can provide just about everything with the exception, possibly, of tattooing for the recruits.

Other ports grant choice sites for factories to new industries. San Diego, not being an industrial port, has regarded each proposed navy establishment as a factory—which, in a way, is correct. From the city the navy can have just about everything it wants from land to anchorages. But in turn the navy, backed by government dredging and redredging, is constantly building the harbor. So the whole thing more than evens itself. Far more than evens itself.



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In the same light by which we of the harbor today may think that everything which is going to happen already has happened—in this same light the people of another thirty or forty years will be looking back on this harbor and recalling: “Do you remember when San Diego’s harbor had only one entrance?”

For it is true. The well-worn channel entrance of the days of Cabrillo, Vizcaíno, Commodore Stockton, and of our own time may date our period as the end of the time when the harbor had only one entrance. “And how under heavens did the harbor people of 1940 manage to get along?”

The new project under consideration by the War Department calls for the cutting of a new channel through what is now the Silver Strand, that strange strip of sand leading from Coronado to the mainland. The project, allowing the warships an alternate entrance and exit from the bay, would cost at least \$20,000,000 and calls for a bridge to span the gap.

Twenty million dollars!

Indeed, a war is on somewhere.

And the grass once more is green in the cemetery.

In this same cemetery was one marker, among a huddle of markers, with the plain words: “Albert Smith.” But even this has been changed now to: “Albert Smith, civilian, spiked guns at Fort Stockton. Raised American flag under fire, 1846.”

He is the civilian who, we recall, stole ashore from the

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American whaler that time and spiked the guns above Old Town so that they could not be fired upon the American refugees aboard the whaler. A few days later he climbed the flagpole of Old Town to hoist the official American colors while pot shots were being fired at him. Yes, we may remember the episode. But for more than half a century his grave in the cemetery had remained merely: "Albert Smith."

In a navy harbor things happen with each new fright elsewhere. They even happen to the graves of our Albert Smiths. And they may happen to the Silver Strand he knew so well.

For already in San Diego his ghost can see the many buildings of the Marine Base, the many buildings of the Naval Training Station, the many buildings of the Destroyer Base with its floating drydock, the headquarters of the Eleventh Naval District, the buildings of the Naval Air Station of North Island, and up in Balboa Park the buildings of the Naval Hospital. A Coast Guard Station is on the bay too. And for Fort Rosecrans the army owns the tip of Point Loma where he, Albert Smith, is buried.

So, in the face of all this year after year, even his robust spirit should become slightly weary of the breathless remark: "My, what a well-fortified city!"

Two entrances to the harbor, as a national defense measure, will be the next violent change, then, to allow the warships a more rapid access to the sea. But with the coming of the new there is always the counterbalancing fade-

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out of something of the old, and the navy's one-time great coaling station next to Point Loma is one of these. Once this station was the toast of the Pacific from Seattle to Mazatlán. The mountains of coal beckoned vessels from everywhere. A two-story building was not enough to house the naval personnel working there. Another building was erected.

Thousands and thousands of tons of coal still remained there (and some may still be there) up to a few years ago, and without takers. A lone caretaker was on the job, and he lived alone in the big building. His duty was to control the ventilating pipes running in and around the black mountains. For the last vessel to use any of the coal was the cruiser *Seattle*, and when she left the seas as obsolete, the last days of the old navy went with her. But the mountain range of coal remained, and continued to remain, as a giant memento for those of the navy who enjoy remembering "when." So in the same fashion someday there will be others who will remember "when" the harbor had only one entrance.

One must add, though, that the coaling station later almost had a customer in the French cruiser *Edgar Quinet*, a lingering coal-burner also. She entered San Diego for coal, needed coal, and was willing to buy coal from the coaling station. The deal was closed. But in the last minute the American officers of the district underwent an attack of conscientiousness. They confided to the Frenchmen that the coal had been lying exposed to sun and rain since before

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many of the Frenchmen were born. The coal would not be of much use, the Americans thought. The Frenchmen were quick to think so, too. The *Edgar Quinet* ordered her coal elsewhere. Thus departed the coaling station's last prospective customer. The waterfront recalls the day.

The people of this navy harbor should be expected to become indifferent about the daily sight of destroyers, submarines, cruisers, repair ships, and the sight of the aircraft carriers which, when at sea off the coast, resemble moving islands during a mirage. The people should be expected to become indifferent about them. But always there is something new, and always there is something a little bit bigger. And when the first of the modern aircraft carriers, *Saratoga* and *Lexington*, entered the harbor channel, the city all but declared a holiday. Life in this harbor city is like that, the ancient bay as usual being the everlasting arena and the surrounding hills with their homes the bleachers.

Or of course there is the other side, the *Bennington* side, or the side when navy fliers do not come home. Or the side when for a while they do not come home—and then do come home. Such as the case of Verne W. Harshman, chief aviation pilot, lost at sea six days off Colombia. Even the navy had abandoned the search for him. But during these six days, without food, he tumbled about in a tiny rubber life raft. By day he was scorched by the equatorial sun, and by night his cramped muscles were stiffened by cold. His land plane, flying off the carrier *Langley*, had gone down

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during a storm. Sharks nosed against the rubber of his raft, trying to upset it. The raft began to leak—but he lived. His family in San Diego had already been notified that the search, after six days, had been abandoned. But he lived. He lived by catching drinking water in his flier's scarf. During any showers he would hold out the scarf, weight it down in the middle with a pair of pliers—and he lived. He finally paddled the leaky raft into the lane of a tramp freighter, the *Serigo*.

Though these navy families certainly can suffer no more grief than civilian families similarly stricken by workaday tragedy, an accident in the navy is—news. But in time, like other news, it is forgotten, too. Yet when the whole Pacific fleet has been searching six days for a man, then has abandoned the search, and the man turns up again, one wonders what the reaction is in his home. In a navy city one soon learns. In this case the reaction was like this:

Mrs Harshman (to her eldest child): “Do you hear? Do you hear? Daddy has been found.”

The youngster could say nothing. He dropped to the floor and hugged his mother's knees.

Some weeks later the flier himself returned, and here are the youngster's first words then:

“Daddy, I didn't miss a day in school all the time you were gone. I'm smart in school.”

For reward the father allowed the boy to trot off to school immediately, to keep his attendance record perfect. And that was the homecoming—in a naval harbor.

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Yes, the years of a harbor roll into decades, the decades into centuries, the navy's popularity goes high, goes low, goes high—and the barometer for all things military remains that old cemetery on Point Loma. Even as the lone marine, that time, was raking the dried leaves from the base of the sycamores, the gums and the planted pines, a new section of the cemetery was already staked out adjoining the old one. And this new section, even then, contained temporary tombstones marked "Reserved."

When asked what this meant, the lone marine seemed surprised that anyone should ask. For retired navy men, it seems, often speak ahead of time for their sites. They want one with a sweep of the old familiar bay. They go out there, select their plot, then ask for it.

*This is a navy town.*

**T**HESE COASTAL ISLANDS—so old and yet so everlastingly evasive—are the harbor's Fringe World. We see them, we see them not. Even after landing on them, even while tramping them, they do not seem quite real somehow.

Only a few of these nearest islands have drinking water on them, accounting in part for the mystery which has hung over them and still hangs over them. Otherwise they would have more dwellers on them, and some have no dwellers at all. Yet even the most sun-cooked of these islands has had a big moment of some sort, though the only way of learning about it may be by talking with fishermen or with the last of the waterfront veterans who long ago poached for California fur seals.

The story of the Lost Woman of San Nicolás has all but

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gone into California schoolbooks, and maybe it has gone into them. But her story seems to be the only really familiar one, although Clipperton Island, south of San Diego, was once the realm of a minor Emperor Jones with a harem of eighteen. And then there is Geronimo Island, lonely and bleak, which for a month was the sole refuge of a shipwrecked party of six hundred. And there is Guadalupe Island, too, the home of the giant sea elephants.

Or up in the Gulf is Tiburon, the last holdout of the once mighty Seris. They are flea-bitten now, they literally are lousy. But nevertheless the fishermen of San Diego still watch themselves, they still keep a rifle handy, when anchored in the rip-tide waters of Tiburon.

There are other islands, too. There is Clarion. There is the timberless Socorro where only a few years ago a San Diego man, marooned without provisions or cartridges, was obliged to kill his game by hand—until rescued through the accidental visit of the clipper *Lois S.*

Or to the north of the harbor, and in sight of San Diego on those peculiar days of mirage visibility, is the more familiar San Clemente, the one nontourist island to the north to be jarred out of its long sleep during our immediate time. The navy is occupying San Clemente today, turning the island into a first line of defense for all of southern California. Hangars are being erected there, and just about everything else, and the surrounding waters—once frequented by San Diego fishermen—are today



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taboo for any vessels whatsoever except government vessels.

But to the west of San Clemente is the lonely, rigid, wind-blasted San Nicolás. And this is the Island of the Lost Woman.

For both San Clemente and San Nicolás, unlike the islands south of San Diego, were one time heavily populated by Indians, and by Indians of a smarter type than on the mainland. In fact, both San Clemente and San Nicolás appear to be a series of layers with an Indian age represented under each layer. Scientists and persons calling themselves scientists have gone there through the years to dig relics and bones. As a result the ancient village sites by now are strangely pockmarked as if by bombs.

The winds across San Nicolás are so strong that most of the island has been sand-blasted clean of vegetation. The Indians had used the original trees, perhaps, but some of the stumps and roots are still there, though nobody would recognize them as such immediately. For, as in some mythical fable, the tree stumps have been turned to sand.

As fast as a stump or root became hollow by age, the wind drove sand into the cavity. Lime dripped into this sand during rainstorms, and the solution helped the sand hold the shape of the original mold. This is why the few visitors there see little sand-trees on the hillsides.

Russian otter hunters of the bygone made of San Nicolás such a hangout that parties of them would be left ashore

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to be picked up the next season along with the furs taken meanwhile. But once the expected relief vessel did not arrive. The marooned Russians, to save food probably, killed off all the Indian men on the island but kept the Indian women.

After several years of this, and after the Russians themselves had gone, the padres on the mainland heard about the state of affairs of the surviving natives over there and sent a vessel to take them off. The vessel was the *Better Than Nothing*.

The inhabitants were rounded up and put aboard. But when the *Better Than Nothing* was about to sail, an Indian woman began to cry that she had left a baby ashore. She went back for the Russian-Indian child, and for some reason the *Better Than Nothing* sailed on without her.

Word that a woman was living alone on San Nicolás persisted along the coast line, but otter hunters putting back into San Diego said that if she was there she certainly was avoiding everybody. But the report of the "Lost Woman" continued.

Three unsuccessful searches were made for her throughout the many years. But on a fourth search a number of Indians were taken along to aid. Working from one end of the island, they scrutinized every foot of the sand-swept hills. The Indians came onto what could have been a wind protection, a crude affair of whalebones and stones. But the woman did not appear. The Indians next found a basket with some feathers in it. They scattered the feathers,

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knowing that if she were alive she would find them and want them. That same day the searching party returned to the spot, and the feathers had all been gathered and put back into the basket.

Next morning one of the searchers discovered her sitting behind a boulder on the shore. She was skinning a seal. She was too occupied, or pretended to be too occupied, to notice that she was being trailed. The rest of the searchers were summoned, and she was surrounded before she could run.

They were afraid she would bite and scratch, but when she saw she was surrounded she bowed her head and held out a chunk of the seal for them to eat. She was taken to the mainland along with all her primitive belongings.

The new food she was obliged to eat did not agree with her, and she died. Her dresses of bird skins, her awls, her wooden knife, her grass-bottles—all these were saved and placed in several museums. And before her death she was christened Juana María.

So much for the near-by American islands to the north of the harbor. But as for the Mexican islands to the south, the reason the "Lost Man of Socorro" managed to pull through was that he remembered having read, when a youngster, the story of a man lost in the Maine woods who captured deer by leaping at them from behind trees as they came to a spring for water.

The island's lone fresh-water supply is a spring on the

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beach. The spring does not show itself until the tide goes out; consequently it tastes of salt.

Some promoters of a sheep-shearing scheme had left the San Diego man there to build a corral and then had not returned as promised. The sheep—being of the domestic variety gone wild—will not come within a mile of a man on the island if they see one. And of men these sheep virtually see none.

The marooned man, being without cartridges, was skeptical about the story he had read when a boy. But desperation drove him to try the experiment. Nor did he have trees to hide behind. But he hid behind boulders alongside the sheep trails. His misses were many during the first months, and because of the hot weather the meat (whenever he could catch it) was good for only half a day. He had to eat fast.

But after the clipper *Lois S* happened to touch at Socorro for no especial reason, and after the man was rescued and brought back to San Diego, the first thing he did was to go, not into a restaurant, but into a barbershop. His beard was a tremendous thing. And when asked by the barber if, like Robinson Crusoe (Alexander Selkirk), he had kept a diary, he answered: "I did. My diary's right here beneath my hair."

The presence of sheep and goats on so many of these bleak islands south of San Diego—the same as found by Selkirk when marooned on one of them, too—seems all the more mysterious because even the oldest of voyagers

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appear to have found them. And yet there remains no doubt about the beasts being of the domestic variety gone wild.

Guadalupe Island, for instance, is overrun not only with goats but also with former house cats gone wild, too. These cats have destroyed much of the bird life, and the skinny goats have been driven to eating the dried seaweed along the rocks of the shore.

Nor is the "Lost Man of Socorro" the only person who has been abandoned down there by promoters who, on paper, have figured ways of making money by commercializing the inexplicable feature of these goats and sheep upon the southern islands.

So recently that the affair is still news instead of legend, the destroyer *Aaron Ward* rescued an entire family from off Guadalupe Island and brought them into San Diego. The Mexican government had granted an American the concession for trying to turn these goats of Guadalupe into jerked meat. Forty goats were to be killed daily, the meat to be sent to the mainland for the Mexican army, and the glands of the goats to China for sale as aphrodisiacs. But something went wrong, and the family hired to operate the concession became marooned in somewhat the same manner as the "Lost Man of Socorro." If he duplicated a Robinson Crusoe, those on Guadalupe duplicated a Swiss Family Robinson, including a minor shipwreck of a small vessel sent with supplies.

The marooned family lived for weeks on only goat meat

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and fish. The rescue by the *Aaron Ward* was quite by accident also, the destroyer having been sent south from San Diego to aid in a big navy search for the lost purse-seiner *Fidelity*.

Those rescued off the island included a tiny girl whose shoes were the biggest part of her, being especially thick for climbing about the volcanic rocks of the island. She had a black eye and was sniffing from a dreadful cold.

"But I'm not crying," she sniffled, when put ashore at San Diego. "I'm not either crying, am I, Mamma?"

"No, you're not crying."

"There, see," the youngster sniffled again—to the spectators on the wharf.

But to San Diego, Guadalupe Island still means the one thing, the home of the giant sea elephants, once considered extinct but now on the increase. And this island, far off to sea by itself, is what saved them. One of the largest of them brought into port weighed five thousand pounds and was sixteen feet long. While being conveyed in a truck from the naval tug *Koka*, which made the capture, to the San Diego zoo, the tail of the monster dragged along the main street. The spectacle was one which caused motorists not to know exactly what they were doing.

Theoretically the capturing of a sea elephant for the San Diego zoo is quite simple, once permission has been obtained from the Mexican government. A three-sided cage of strong boards and wire is set on the beach close to the surf line, the open side of the cage being set towards

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the beach. The men then pick out their sea elephant from the herd basking ashore and shoo the creature backwards towards the surf and into the cage. The open side is then closed, and the cage, sea elephant and all, is floated out to the waiting vessel by means of buoys and hoisted aboard by the ship's crane.

The captures for the San Diego zoo have always been made this way, care being taken to keep the animal sprayed with sea water during the voyage to port. The water prevents the animal from becoming itchy and nervous. In the zoo's special pool for them the sea elephants have gone three weeks without food. But when they start eating they can eat more than fifty pounds of fresh mackerel daily. Also, bath salts are provided from out of the ocean. Three tons of it.

A person probably could be hurt by a sea elephant if he deliberately wanted to be hurt. He could trip down onto the sand in front of one and let the sea elephant plunge upon him with its weight as its only weapon. And maybe this is what the early English pirates meant when they recorded that they had been pursued by sea elephants off the Californias. The pirates even drew pictures of themselves in hand-to-jaw combat with the "terrible monsters," all of which helped, no doubt, to impress the old folks at home. But a sea elephant can be easily avoided on shore, the same as any other seal. Even when the sea-elephant bulls are fighting among themselves during mating season, the procedure is for the bulls to use their weight instead of

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their mouths, and they are awkward about it. They rear their heads and shoulders, then let them drop upon an opponent, if possible, and that is about all they can do. We may owe little to the early English pirates, then, for their information about sea-elephant lore, but they do seem to have been the first to make use of these southern islands, or at least the first to have left any recordings about them.

The Pacific island on which Alexander Selkirk was marooned is too far south of San Diego to be included in this more immediate group. However, the pirates who caused him to be on the island and the pirates who later rescued him were old stand-bys of the islands.

A shipmate of Selkirk, the Scotch sailor, was Captain John Clipperton, after whom is named Clipperton Island, the weird sand dune upon the sea so familiar to the local tuna clippers and which was once the realm of the Negro with a harem of eighteen.

And the pirate who ultimately rescued Selkirk was Woodes Rogers, who was wounded off Lower California while chasing the Spanish galleon *Duquesa*.

Captain Rogers took the marooned Scotch sailor and his now-famous diary off the island of Juan Fernández and made him mate on the return voyage to England, thus allowing the diary to reach Daniel Defoe for a flourishing rearrangement.

But Selkirk, when found by Rogers, actually was living on goat meat and was dressed in goatskins. And so we have no date for the time when goats and sheep were first



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spread among these southern islands, especially among the islands off Lower California. Also, Selkirk had been bothered by rats and cats which swarmed the island. The cats stole his meat, but ultimately he made friends with them, feeding them "goats' flesh, and they helped keep away the rats." These early sailors, of course, could have carried live goats and live sheep from one island to another for a fresh meat supply. And ships' cats, as on Guadalupe today, could have moved ashore from the vessels. But always, in these early recordings, the goats or the sheep or the cats seem to have been there already.

The affairs of Captain Rogers, Captain Clipperton, Captain William Dampier, Captain Thomas Stradling, and even of Selkirk are so interlaced in their subsequent maneuvers off Lower California that to separate their stories is not only rather hopeless but also useless. They were always helping each other among the islands, or quarreling with each other, but never once forgetting their main purpose: attacks on the Spanish treasure ships. Selkirk, after returning to the Californias with his friend Captain Rogers, got in the fun by being given command of the next prize captured, the galleon *Aumento*. For out of his diary he did not net a shilling, they say, and so returned to sea.

Captain Dampier, affected with dropsy, one day made a landing on the Tres Marias group, now a Mexican penal colony, and had himself buried up to his neck in the warm sand. This brought on such a sweat that he told his men he was completely recovered. But the best way to bring on a

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sweat down there today, perhaps, would be to sit in the square of the penal colony while the prison band is giving its late-afternoon concert. Snakes have a habit of appearing from out the foliage at these times. For instance, when the yacht *Stranger* was at Tres Marias and the guests were ashore listening to the music, three constrictors hung from the trees above them.

But the islands nearest to San Diego, the Coronados, have their snakes, too. Rattlers. South Coronado Island has plenty of them, yet nobody knows how they got there or why they are not on the other two islands of the group as well. It seems unlikely that sailors would have taken the pains to cart rattlesnakes so far. The theory is that they are a hang-over from the time the tiny Coronados were a part of the Point Loma mainland.

Yet while South Coronado Island has rattlesnakes, North Coronado has the bird life. It is a favorite nesting grounds and a heaven for collectors. A prevailing explanation is that the birds may have killed off the rattlesnakes on North Coronado and that the rattlesnakes in turn may have kept killing off the young birds on South Coronado, depending on which held the advantage at the start. But today apparently a compromise has been reached: the rattlesnakes stick to one island, the birds to the other. They do not mix.

Seal hunters and otter hunters did not treat the Coronados any too conservatively. For even within the memory of a few persons in San Diego sea elephants used to make

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their home on the Coronados. The average seal hunter, though, did not make a practice of killing the sea elephants; their hides were too large to be stretched out and handled, and they took up too much room in the small skiffs. Whalers were the ones who killed off most of the sea elephants. Sailors and fishermen also enjoyed taking pot shots at the giant creatures just for fun. But today they are protected, and a few already have been seen nosing their way around the Coronados on the comeback trail.

California sea lions, though, are without much protection around the Coronados. In fact the Mexican government granted a concession to an American dog-food concern for the wholesale slaughtering of these sea lions. They were (and perhaps still are) being killed down there, then brought to southern California to be canned as meat under the concern's dog-food label. These California sea lions are the ones used in circuses and vaudeville. But they are the young ones, the small ones, and the rookeries of Santa Cruz Island to the north have become the base of supply for the world. Frequently, when these young sea lions, whether with circuses or with zoos, develop homesickness, they are shipped back to breathe once again the salt air of their native sea. A few days of this and they are said to be satisfied and may then be returned to their owners without fear of another homesickness attack. But when homesick they will not eat—or act.

These sea lions, though, were not the seals for which the hunters searched the Coronado Islands in the old days.

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The California fur seals were what were wanted. Here are extracts from the Coronado entries in the log of Captain George W. Chase, a former San Diego sealer and hunter, dead now:

Beach very rough and fur seals were scarce today. Took care of blubber and skins. Shook out lots of skins. Tired out. Schooner leaking like a basket.

Morning comes in blowing a strong gale from the southward; the schooner tailing on the flats and thumping hell out of herself.

Today a Chinese junk anchored on the east side. One of my men laid up with neuralgia in the head. Got some pups. Wind light again.

Sighted another crew coming to the rookery, so had to scare the seals out.

Coincidence: this old-timer's son, who in turn is now a waterfront veteran but who as a boy accompanied his father to the islands, remarked not so long ago while standing on one of the piers: "There are plenty of fur seals left. Not plenty, either—but a lot more than people think. It's because nobody knows how to look for them any more. These California fur seals don't live like regular seals. Believe me, they don't. They don't go swimming around with their heads out of water. Not fur seals. They live in caves, and you've got to know what sort of caves."

He made this remark at a time when the California fur seals were considered absolutely extinct. But because it attracted peculiar expressions from everyone listening to

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him on the wharf, he nimbly continued, as if for the fun of it:

“What would people think if someday somebody discovered a family of white seals living in a cave on—well, for instance, on Guadalupe? Supposing there were a family of white seals living in a cave on Guadalupe? Supposing there were? What would people think?”

The idea, of course, was too fantastic even for fiction. Yet later, when an expedition from the San Diego Zoological Society did discover just such a family of white seals living in a cave on Guadalupe—and took photographs of them—he said no more about them. All he did was grin.

A California fur seal, the only one in captivity, is now in the San Diego zoo.

But the one island where a big time was once had by all is Geronimo Island, the tiny spot of land which supported the largest and longest beach party on local record.

The year was 1873, the guests totaled six hundred men, women and children, and their days on the island numbered thirty. They were the passengers of the overloaded steamer *Sacramento*, en route to San Francisco. At four in the morning, during a fog, the vessel struck a reef. The reef was uncharted then, but is now called the Sacramento Reef in honor of the vessel which discovered it by piling up on it. Parts of the iron from the *Sacramento* wreckage may still be seen down there. But Geronimo Island itself is not much to see, for it is barren of vegetation and has no water. It is larger than the Coronados, smoother too, but

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about the same color. Geronimo is the island with the large petrified forest. The logs are about three feet through. They cannot be taken away, for they have become cemented to the island; they are all part of it, like the rocks.

The seas happened to be calm the morning the *Sacramento* struck, and all the passengers were safely landed on Geronimo. The captain, who had only one eye, lost his nerve after the crash. The view of his command all shattered was too much for him. His chief engineer took charge. The chief, who still has relatives in San Diego, saw to it that all the passengers were safely landed, and also that food was brought ashore from the wrecked vessel. He asked the chief steward if he could prepare food for the six hundred, but the steward shook his head. They were too many for him all at once. His galley helpers also were panic-stricken at the thought.

"All right," the chief said. He next turned to the mate and told him to put the steward and his helpers in irons. There were not enough irons to go around, so a chain was used. In this way the galley help were made fast to one long chain, and there they stood, looking rather silly.

The chief next obtained a huge caldron off the liner, and into this caldron he emptied everything he could find in the way of food—preserved chicken, jerked beef, preserved vegetables. All this went into the caldron, and it was stirred above a fire. The marooned six hundred then had their first meal, and the mixture became known as what is still called in San Diego "Geronimo stew."

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After everybody had eaten except the chief steward and his helpers, the chief asked them if they could prepare meals after this. They replied that they could.

For thirty days the six hundred were fed in this way. The seas remained calm enough to maintain passage between the shore and the wreck. The *Sacramento* at the time carried a million dollars in coins. San Francisco had ordered these coins to help replace gold dust as currency, and they were in wooden boxes. These boxes were spread into a floor, a protection of canvas was put over the floor, and the women lived there.

As no help arrived, a boat's crew was organized, and it rowed the hundred and ninety miles to San Diego for help. Vessels were sent south, but on reaching Geronimo they found more than six hundred to rescue, for in the meantime five babies had been born on the island. The crews referred to these babies as "the little Geronimites."

San Diego's harbor does have this peculiar Fringe World, then, a world of dots which is known and yet not known. What may be happening down there—at this moment—on one of the dots will likely not be learned in San Diego for another month, if learned at all. The harbor's fishboats remain the go-betweens, either bringing back the news or else making it. And always for the fishermen there remains the uncertain Tiburon, deep up in the Gulf.

Tiburon is anything but beautiful and is so dry that water has to be lugged many miles by the women. Yet the Tiburons will not consider moving away. They believe

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that their island was the first land created and that all the surrounding world was constructed later. They will have nothing to do with missionaries, but to this day continue to worship the turtle and the pelican.

Mexicans have frequently branded the Tiburons as cannibals. The description certainly cannot be authenticated, but is believed rather to be the outgrowth of past griefs met by Mexicans who went to the island. In the past they needed some all-powerful word to describe the Seris of Tiburon and apparently decided on "cannibals" as carrying the greatest warning.

The Tiburons comprise the dwindling remnants of a lost world, really, and the few linguists who have succeeded in deciphering part of the language have stated that it is perhaps the most ancient in existence. Meaning, perhaps, that it is the least changed by outside influence.

The native deaths on Tiburon are far exceeding the births now, and not many of the Seris are left. Even the old chief, Juan Tomás, is gone now, having died recently of pneumonia. But he has always seemed to be the chief on Tiburon.

Some who have visited Tiburon from San Diego say that he showed them a good time—that is, as good a time as an impoverished chief could show. Others who have gone there from San Diego have been killed. The stories about Tiburon have gone up and down in this way, much in the same manner as the planes in the harbor.

A friend of San Diego's former harbor master, Charlie



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Stedman, now dead, was killed by Tiburon Islanders. He was Henry Johnson, of San Diego, and had gone to the island with Captain George Porter looking for rare shells.

Another time the sloop *Examiner*, out of San Diego, touched at Tiburon. The four men of the sloop rowed ashore in the skiff and inquired by signs if game could be had on the island. The chief signaled in the affirmative. The men landed. Two of them stayed behind with the skiff; the others started inland. The chief told the two men left behind that if they would lend him a rifle he would kill a deer for them. The rifle was lent. With it the Indians ambushed the two Americans who had gone inland. One was shot. The other ran, but was chased down and killed with rocks.

Another party, the entire Grindell party, also met death there. This was in 1909. Also, two other visitors just before them. As a result people gradually neglected to visit the rip-tide-guarded island. For the stories of the deaths were enduring stories and were told in such a way and with so many versions that one could presume the happenings to be but a year or so old. And then there was the double murder of the two North Island fliers.

But to offset some of these are the stories told by Tommy Jordan, waterfront shore-boat operator, who lived on the island while on a guano expedition. He and the chief got along all right, although Tommy said he was careful not to lend his gun to him. One night, however, Chief Juan broke into Tommy's liquor supply and became wobbly.

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He made so much noise that Tommy drove the old man (for he seemed old even then) out of the tent with a board off a liquor crate.

The chief held a council of war about this, and in the morning he and his tribesmen came to Tommy's tent demanding an explanation. Tommy said to the chief: "If you could hold your whisky like a man I'd treat you like a man. But when you act like a baby I've got to treat you like a baby and spank you with a board."

Chief Juan brooded over this remark and at noon returned with the verdict that Tommy was correct.

The first European to see the Tiburons was Alvaro Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca on that transcontinental journey of his in 1536. He described the Tiburons as using a poison "so deadly that if the leaves be steeped in neighboring water, the deer and other animals drinking it soon burst."

Also, Tiburon became known to the Spaniards as the Isle of Giants. But this seems farfetched. Yet the tag of "giants" was given them by Coronado in 1540, and their size increased with the telling because the Tiburons had killed a force of Coronado's men. He sent an expedition back to the island to punish the Indians, but the Tiburons killed seventeen of these too, and many of the others died later from poison wounds.

The governors of Sonora, long ago, tried to subdue these Seri Tiburon Islanders by sending a band of a hundred men to invade the island. But they were held off by nineteen of the Tiburons.

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Today—though at long intervals—yachts out of San Diego penetrate the rocky waters of Tiburon with scientists aboard to make a study of the Tiburons before it is too late. One of these (a collector of relics) attributed the success of his stay to the fact that he had brought with him great quantities of safety pins for trading.

It was a winter day when he landed, and a cold wind was sweeping over the island from the Gulf. The Seri youngsters were dressed as usual in rags and shells. They stood around shivering with cold as they stared at him landing on the beach. He got out his safety pins immediately and began fastening the children's rags together for warmth. This so amused the parents that they encouraged him to stay—to the last safety pin.

But no sooner was he back in San Diego saying that the cunning treachery of the Tiburons was now a thing of the past, all gone and ended, than the harbor's Coast Guard station received a radio from a tuna clipper to dispatch a cutter to Tiburon instantly. The Coast Guard cutter *Calypso*, having the harbor watch that day, was given the call. The trouble was that the tuna clipper, while disabled and anchored off Tiburon, was being threatened by the Indians. Disguised in women's garb, the men of Tiburon had attempted to board the fishboat to raid it. They had a couple of rifles. But then, too, so did the San Diego fishermen. They held the Tiburons off until the Coast Guard cutter arrived.

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So the mystifying Tiburon remains for the harbor what it always has remained—the Island-to-Talk-About.

And there is “The Isle of Nothing,” meaning the diminutive Clipperton. Skippers of the tuna fleet long have used this self-explanatory phrase relative to the island, and they take pride in being able to find it.

The island, less than a mile and a half long, is so flat that during high seas the surf comes close to washing over it to the other side. Not only that, but in the center of the island is a wide lake which just missed being fresh. It is brackish instead, because of the surf wash, but in emergencies its water can be drunk if one is not too particular about dying afterwards.

The one landmark is a rock, the same rock which formed the main wind shelter for the Negro and his kingdom of eighteen. The rock has straight sides, is narrow, and can be mistaken at sea for a sail. But little else is left except some formerly domestic pigs now gone wild. They had been taken there for a soldier garrison, but by now have turned into fish-eaters. Frequently the crew of a tuna clipper will capture a pig and bring it aboard, but the pig will eat only fish. Out of necessity these pigs have learned to catch fish. Fishermen have watched and watched, trying to find out how they do it. But the pigs are apparently too scared to try when men are in the vicinity.

The ownership of Clipperton has been continuously disputed between Mexico and France. One of the most recent international hearings gave the ownership to France.

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But the Mexican government holds to the doctrine that possession is five fifths of the law, and at one time sent a small company of Mexican soldiers to live there.

Being Mexican soldiers of their period, each was allowed to bring his wife or lady friend. Each few months or so the company was relieved by fresh soldiers and fresh supplies. These were brought by a vessel from Manzanillo.

The arrangements went along happily enough until one day Mexico broke into a revolution. The vessel from Manzanillo did not arrive, all the officials on the mainland being too busy with the revolution to remember Clipperton's tiny colony.

Records were burned and lost, the government was overturned, then overturned again, and five years passed before a surviving clerk in Manzanillo was awakened by a dreadful memory. He communicated his memory to others, and in time a vessel was dispatched to Clipperton to bury the bones.

There were bones to be found, all right, but they were the bones of all the soldiers except one, a Negro. He was very much alive. Through skillful Clipperton maneuvering he had made himself ruler of the island. One by one the other men under him had either died of scurvy or been executed for "mutiny." But the women had all survived with him.

The Negro, when brought to Mexico City for trial, tried to explain himself out of it by saying that men were more susceptible than women to scurvy. One of the women,

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though, had grown to dislike him intensely. He had made her do most of the drudgery, such as the cleaning of fish. She told the court too much about the mutiny executions. So at sunrise in Mexico City the former Emperor of Clipperton paid the price and, probably, with only alloyed regret.

Or there is "Lost Island," almost directly off San Diego. The pinnacle is Bishop's Rock, which comes to within fifteen feet of the surface. Even in smooth weather the seas kick white around this rock, and in rough weather many a good vessel has crashed there in the old days of no charts. The Atlantic has its "Lost Atlantis," and Bishop's Rock and vicinity have been considered a similar "Lost Atlantis" of the Pacific. The vicinity, known as the Tanner banks and the Cortez banks, is a sunken mountain actually, or rather a ridge of sunken mountains. One can recall with what revered confidence a few of the fishermen used to tell how, when looking down into the seas there, they had seen traces of walls and towers. These old men could have been sincere in what they said, for the forests of waving kelp weave strange patterns in their deep shadows below. But expeditions have investigated and have found nothing of that character, and so such stories do not go the water-front rounds any more.

Yet such banks as these are what makes the present tuna fishing what it is. The Cortez and Tanner banks, being the closest, were the first to be utilized in a big way by the tuna fishermen, but now of course the fleets have moved south-

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ward instead. Whenever a new bank is discovered, the word spreads among the commercial fishermen of San Diego as would the finding of gold among prospectors. For tuna prefer these banks for the food which surrounds them. If tuna live on smaller fish, these smaller fish in turn must live on still smaller fish, and these ultimately live on particles found in seaweed—the endless story.

The tuna, then, can be said to graze on the hillsides of these buried mountain peaks as mountain sheep graze on the hillsides of regular mountains. This is not an exact picture, but the idea is roughly there.

Several of these banks, such for instance as the Morgan banks, six hundred miles south of San Diego, have been named after the San Diego fisherman who discovered them. This seems fair enough. And yet in this respect one can recall a final gesture by the old Portuguese captain of the clipper *Oceana*, one of the first of the tuna clippers.

When he discovered a new bank five hundred miles south of San Diego and was urged by the other Portuguese and Italian fishermen to have the bank named after him, he answered: “No, no. We’ll name it after all of us.” And so he gave the new bank the name it has today—the Uncle Sam.

SOMEDAY, perhaps a century from now, North Island and what it represents to our baffling span on earth will be explained. Our period through the childhood of aviation will be dissected by professors. And mankind will know then whether we were another Children's Crusade speeding the way to our own finish, or whether our period was another Renaissance, or whether we were merely out for a good time learning better ways of bombing one another.

North Island, occupying the center stage of the harbor, is a body of land completely surrounded by planes and submerged under planes. A condensed history of flying was enacted there, is still being enacted there, and the patron saint of North Island is Glenn Curtiss.

He arrived in San Diego in 1910 with an exhibition



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team. What little flying was being done elsewhere in those days was being done in the morning, the afternoons being considered too windy. But to his surprise he found the San Diego afternoons rather calm and the mornings ideal for his work.

Instead of hauling his exhibition team out of town that night, he made a formal request to be granted the use of North Island for three years and the privilege of erecting the necessary plant for conducting a school.

Since that day North Island has not seen a moment without planes, be they the old pusher type, the tractor type, civilian, army or navy—until today all the planes of the aircraft squadrons of the battle fleet are serviced there and housed there.

Because of North Island the current generation of San Diego (this is, those born within the past thirty years) has been deprived of that thrill which comes with seeing one's first flying machine land in town.

But the current generation has not been deprived of watching adults sneaking up on sea gulls, then frightening them at close range, the better to study the mechanics of wing structure and quick take-off. North Island has not *had* its day: North Island is still having its day. But North Island is no longer the home of fanatical individualists like that wild-eyed Swede, Ivar T. Mayerhoffer, with his home-made contraption, "The Flying Whale"; nor the home of the world's first loopist and the world's first upside-down flier, Lincoln Beachey.

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North Island no longer has those day-long arguments over which method of instruction is the better, the "Wright Method," with its dual control, instructor and pupil riding side by side until the student could pilot the ship himself—maybe—or the "Curtiss Method," in which the student alone in the plane hopped and hopped and hopped until he could hop without crashing—maybe.

For that was North Island.

That was the North Island of 1910 and of 1911 and of 1912. That was still the North Island when Glenn Curtiss made from there (in 1911) the world's first seaplane flight. And when Major T. C. Macauley from North Island made the world's first night flight. Both the army and the navy already were represented among the students. But it was up to Curtiss to interest the navy even more. This he did with the seaplane. For until he actually took a plane off the water, the admirals in Washington remained convinced that aviation was an army game.

Today, of course, all of North Island, once held by the army for flying, is now held by the navy exclusively. The army is out. And such is life.

But if Curtiss, flying off North Island, showed the navy that planes could be taken off the water, Eugene Ely in the same month went one better by showing the navy that a plane could be landed on a deck. He landed on the deck of the cruiser *Pennsylvania*. Lines and sandbags were used as arresting gear on a wooden platform over the quarter-deck and after-turret. This was the beginning, during the

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January of 1911, of the modern aircraft-carrier equipment.

During the early flying days on North Island the saying was prevalent that no flier ever lasted more than three years. There seemed reason for this remark, for the year 1913 was an especially ugly one for accidents.

Lieutenant L. E. Goodier, the first army man to have made a flight on North Island, also was the first army man to crash there. He was badly injured while attempting to turn too close to the water in a flying boat.

Two months later—during the same year of 1913—Lieutenant Rex Chandler, Coast Artillery Corps, was killed after falling into the bay. The next month Lieutenant J. D. Park was killed. And then Lieutenant E. L. Ellington, cavalry, was killed. And then Lieutenant H. M. Kelly, infantry.

Considering the few planes in use, these army deaths on North Island during one year seemed such a frightful price to pay that a study of the accidents was made—a study which resulted in the belief that some of the fatal accidents would have been merely forced landings had the engines not been in the rear of the pilots. In the case of a bad landing, the engine was knocked loose from its supports and fell upon the occupants of the machine.

This hoodoo year of '13 was the year when Sergeant William C. Ocher coined the phrase that has stuck to North Island all these years. He said he would rather be "the oldest pilot in the army than the hottest." Apparently he lived up to it, for, twenty years later, while still on duty,

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he was awarded a thousand dollars by the government for safety inventions used in blind flying.

In the same manner that the phrase is an heirloom on North Island, so too is the copy of the first army flying rules posted over there. The rules included:

Do not take up aviation if you expect to be married soon or are in love.

Horses will be tied to the picket line provided for private mounts and not to trees, fences, water pipes or buildings.

Dogs without collars and muzzles will be shot.

Do not enter this branch of the army lured by hopes of increased pay. Expenses are high and there is no use trying to conceal the fact.

If you are the sort of person who likes to keep his hands clean, don't take up aviation.

If you are a bluffer, don't take up aviation. You cannot expect to bluff the atmosphere, etc., etc.

The reason for the fourth item was illustrated by the case of Captain B. D. Foulois (later a major general and head of the Air Corps). When funds on the island were low, he fished from his own pocket \$150 to maintain the upkeep of his army plane.

Another sad case was that of "The Old Forty-niners," so named because there were forty-nine of them. They comprised a North Island detachment sent to Honolulu to establish an army aviation school there. In Honolulu their hardships were increased because for two years this

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detail had no planes, and the infantry in Hawaii would not let the fliers forget the fact. They were called the "Walking Aviators."

The saying goes that North Island—though today so complicated, so machinelike, so guarded, so serious, so tremendous—has furnished more news stories to the world per square foot of land than any other island. It is just a saying. And yet, like all sayings, there is something in back of it, certainly.

Civilians, in glancing across the bay at North Island today, see a baffling land of hangars, shops, factories, runways, landing fields. All is complicated, all is secret, and all is beyond a lone man's comprehension. Records perhaps are being broken, but we know nothing about them, and are not supposed to know anything about them. Individual fliers have been swallowed into what it takes to make The Whole. Even they, the best of them, are but part of something else. Even they today are machines, and over them today giving orders are other machines. North Island is still North Island, but the personalities on it have been transfixed into A Personality. Cameras are not wanted, or crowds, or headlines—or volunteer aid from the little boys around town.

But how different it all was on North Island when, on March 28, 1913, Lieutenant T. D. Milling, flying a Burgess tractor type, created a new world's record for two-seater by remaining aloft four hours and twenty-two minutes.

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How different when, on Christmas of that same year, Lieutenant J. E. Carberry and Lieutenant W. R. Taliaferro established a new American altitude climb for pilot and passenger. They climbed to seven thousand feet.

How different when, in 1911, Galbraith Rogers arrived from New York in a Wright Model D, the first trans-continental flight. Forty-nine days.

Or when, in 1912, Lieutenant (later Rear Admiral) John Towers established above North Island a new world's endurance record for seaplanes. He was aloft six hours and ten minutes. He was, incidentally, one of the first students on North Island, arriving for the class of 1910-11. In one of his early flights he was thrown from his plane when it hit a "bump." The plane at the time was at two thousand feet, but he caught hold of the landing-gear framework. Although his legs were swinging in mid-air he pulled himself up and climbed back into the pilot's seat.

And, too, the excitement on North Island when R. E. Scott, formerly an army officer, showed a device with which he said he could drop bombs with "an approach to mechanical precision." He was asked to prove it. He did, for the world's first time, on that April morning of 1914. He made four hits out of five from an altitude of eight hundred feet.

His pilot over North Island was Lieutenant T. F. Dodd, who, with Sergeant Marcus, already had been headlined

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for having just completed a cross-country record by flying 246 miles in four hours and thirty-three minutes.

And that same year from North Island, Lieutenant H. L. Muller, flying a Curtiss tractor, established the altitude record for "all future time" by reaching 17,441 feet. But what does remain permanent about the record today was his finding that the air above San Diego—after he had reached ten thousand feet—was warmer than on the ground. This feature of San Diego's air still holds true, naturally, the peculiarity being due, it is said, to the heat waves circulating from the desert back to the ocean.

The civilian students on North Island included the first Chinaman to learn to fly. He was Tom Green, who later became a captain in his home country. And there was Miss Tiny Broadwick, the first person to show San Diego a parachute jump. She flew over the San Diego exhibition and, after jumping, landed far beyond sight of the exhibition grounds. Next day she did it again—but better.

Yet long before this, among the earliest, was the Swede, Ivar T. Mayerhoffer, and his creation, "The Flying Whale." Perhaps every town at some early time has had a Mayerhoffer. Perhaps he is no exception. For a Mayerhoffer creates no records, he originates no lasting stunts to be duplicated by a school of fliers. Yet each time a Mayerhoffer takes off he produces a miracle; each time he lands he produces another one.

San Diego's Mayerhoffer operated his ailerons by a con-

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traption fitting over his shoulders like a yoke. "I can't get used to it," he would say. He would say this ahead of time even to prospective customers. He did not have many, but he had the whole town for his gallery. He charged his passengers "five dollars a throw"—the phrase at the time being more accurate than slangy.

His craft was the first commercial seaplane to be operated on the Pacific Coast. For his power he used the remnants of a Roberts two-cycle, six-cylinder motor. The hull, made out of boards, had so much suction that even the harbor was hardly large enough for a take-off. But once he managed somehow to get off he would fly over North Island against strict regulations. The year was 1914-15.

"Swede's going to fly today! Swede's going to fly today!" The information had a way of spreading, and the ambulance would come down to the waterfront.

To curb him, a patrol boat was stationed at the narrow entrance of the first of his runways between two piers. This bottled him up for a while, but not for long. He changed his runway. These piers have since been torn down, but in the days of Swede Mayerhoffer the rickety piers were always crowded with spectators. For he was always around there, either repairing his craft from a crash or taking off for another one.

Merely to land on the water shook the seaplane up enough, but he had a bigger ambition. He began landing his seaplane on land. He built a landing runway of greased boards, and he would try to shoot the ship up these.



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In one of his crashes a woman passenger was drowned. In another crash he plunged from four hundred feet, striking the bay. The plunge seemed to have been straight down, but it could not have been, for he lived, and he managed to keep his motor afloat.

The Swede told Joe Boquel, whose name at the time was surpassing Lincoln Beachey's, that Joe was a fool not to get more money for his stunts, as he was certain to be killed.

Joe answered: "Who in hell are you to tell me I'll be killed? You're due next, you know."

The Swede, however, was right. Joe Boquel did go first. He was killed a few weeks later while stunting for the San Diego exhibition. Mayerhoffer lasted another year, eventually being killed near Los Angeles, struck by his own propeller.

For San Diego, though, the name of Lincoln Beachey will never die—not after that Sunday afternoon when off Point Loma he made the world's first upside-down flight, the world's first loop, then returned and did them again. The people of San Diego, crowded on every hill that Sunday afternoon, cannot forget.

Or perhaps the age of mellowness at last is descending. For, surely, it can descend on a city the same as on a person. So many of us around here already are thinking fondly of aviation's past instead of concentrating on its present or its future. But that is the way it will have to be. What formerly would make a front-page story, and get

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us all running over to North Island, today would not be mentioned, or enjoyed, or watched, or argued about—or noticed. Nothing short of a hundred planes colliding all at once could compete today with San Diego's aviation stories of yesterday. A squadron of planes leaving San Diego this week for Honolulu receives less than three paragraphs, third page. Besides, the squadrons from San Diego are now making such flights all the time. And to Panama nonstop, also. The novelty is over.

Yet some of these old names in aviation on North Island deserve a trace of permanence, for the editions carrying some of their obituaries have long ago been used for wrapping fish, we shall say. Yet all these old-timers are not dead. Far from it. Some are still flying. Even they perhaps secretly cherish those old memories of North Island like some veteran trouper remembering the night so long ago when his juggling act was billed second instead of being the opener in the Palace.

All this accounts in part for the subsequent tossing of so many names at random into this bushel basket. For what these early men did on North Island for aviation at the risk of their shoulder blades in those rickety craft has not been exactly forgotten, although laurels since then have had a peculiar habit of drenching some fliers too much for their own good while forgetting others completely.

Lieutenant W. R. Taliaferro, during the August of 1915, established from North Island a new American endurance record of nine hours and forty-eight minutes. His fuel ex-

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hausted, he landed with a dead stick. Next month he was killed by a fall into the bay.

Next year, 1916, Captain C. C. Culver, in a plane near Los Angeles, sent radiotelegraph signals which were received on North Island. A month later he sent radio messages from his plane to a plane piloted by Lieutenant W. A. Robertson. These were the first instances on record in which radio was demonstrated as an absolute success in sending and receiving messages in the air.

The death of Lieutenant H. B. Post, who was killed while attempting an altitude record from North Island, February 9, 1914, is responsible for the pusher-type plane definitely being condemned by the army. He lost control of his plane. And the motor, being in back of him, fell on him.

This was one death too many of this sort for the army. But the condemnation of the pusher types left the school on North Island with only two planes.

But it is doubtful if any North Island class quite equaled that of 1915-17 in students who later became celebrities or who already were civilian celebrities before starting to fly.

This class included Major J. P. Mitchel, the one-time mayor of New York, after whom Mitchel Field, on Long Island, is named; Captain Roscoe Fawcett, of the Fawcett Publications; Norman Ross, then the world's swimming champion; Major W. R. Ream, one of the first flight surgeons of the army, who now has a landing field named

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after him close to San Diego; Colonel T. C. Turner, who later became chief of the Marine Air Service; and there was Captain Henry H. Arnold, later Major General and chief of the Army Air Corps. The list of that class could go on and on, but others among the class will be mentioned later, especially those who stayed with flying.

But the next world event occurred in 1918-19 when Major A. D. Smith attempted a transcontinental flight to New York and return with five planes. These five planes, a record number at that time for such an attempt, flew from North Island to New York by way of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and the two Carolinas. The fliers remained in New York a week and were the talk of the country.

Their return trip to San Diego went well until they reached El Paso, Texas. Here the planes, after landing, were struck by a violent wind. All except one were overturned and damaged beyond repair. However, this was the first time in history that a formation of planes had flown from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

Another job handed North Island in 1919 was the formation of an aerial forest patrol. As radio communication still required too expensive an equipment and was not dependable, carrier pigeons were carried in each plane and released whenever a fire was sighted. This accounts for the pigeon lofts which remained for so long on North Island.

Lieutenant James H. Doolittle on September 4, 1922;

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flew from Jacksonville, Florida, to San Diego in twenty-one hours—a record which stood for eight years.

The world's first refueling in midair was successfully attempted above North Island in 1923. The pilots in the plane were Lieutenant Lowell H. Smith and Lieutenant J. P. Richter, who thereby broke records for the combination of speed, duration and distance.

But this is getting ahead a little, for in 1917 the navy was granted authority to move in on North Island and occupy two old buildings and the Curtiss school hangar for sea-planes. This, of course, was the beginning of the present Naval Air Station and the beginning of the end of the army there. For the army on North Island is no more.

This was a hard gulp for the army, and it has never quite overcome the irony of the thing. But as a final fling, and to celebrate the Armistice, the army put into the air from North Island in 1918 the largest number of planes aloft at any time at one place in the United States. The planes numbered 212. They did not fly in the tight formations of today, but rather spread all over the sky, which made their number seem four times larger than that used in such flights today. This first big flight—which brought newspaper correspondents to San Diego from all points—was under command of Lieutenant Colonel H. B. S. Burwell.

To attempt the first nonstop transcontinental flight, Lieutenant Oakley Kelly and Lieutenant John A. Macready had on North Island, in 1922, a thick-wing monoplane with a wingspread of ninety-six feet. But the gigantic

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ship (certainly gigantic for then) was powered by a single Liberty motor. The ship had never taken off with a full capacity, so the moment of take-off was something to see, and all of San Diego came out to see it.

After covering a half-mile of North Island before it could lift itself, the ship then was headed straight for the bluffs of Point Loma. The pilots were forced to bank at an altitude of a hundred feet. They circled North Island twice, then aimed for the mountains—only to find the pass blocked by a fog.

The fliers then decided to circle back over North Island and try to break the endurance record. When they were again above the field they dropped a message to the commanding officer requesting that he make necessary arrangements to authenticate the world's record if they should succeed. From then on they circled North Island for thirty-six hours and eighteen minutes, with the whole country following the news about them. But all for nothing.

For, despite the fact that the plane was watched by thousands during the thirty-six hours of circling, the record was not authenticated and was never allowed because of lack of official witnesses.

Although the fliers were disappointed about this, they started out on another nonstop transcontinental attempt as soon as the ship was reconditioned on North Island. A cracked water jacket forced them down at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indianapolis, but they had broken the world's

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record for distance flight. They had covered 2,284 miles and again were the talk of America and Europe.

The next event was the round-the-world flight which started and ended on North Island in 1924. This flight, as we may recall, occupied 176 days. Lieutenant Lowell Smith was in command after the planes reached Alaska.

But in this haste to speak about records broken on North Island, or from North Island, the story has moved too rapidly into near-modern times. Sweeter is the feeling to return once again to those hedge-hopping days on the island when aerial charts were nothing more than railway maps obtained from the local railway station, when the few plane compasses were more misleading than useful, when beacons as yet were not so much as a futuristic dream, when emergency landing fields were unknown. But even then, almost from the start, these pilots on North Island were attempting to push their crates into the back country. To get carried by wind drift into the deserts of Mexico was easy, brutally easy, during an overcast sky. Some of the pilots, when lost, had no other alternative but to die after forced landings, and two others when lost from North Island were murdered by Tiburon Indians.

Lieutenant W. A. Robertson, with Colonel H. G. Bishop as passenger, started from North Island for Calexico. Without knowing it, they were going in the wrong direction. They flew to the limit of the gas supply, then made a dead-stick landing on what they thought was the shore of Salton Sea.

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After walking south they turned around and retraced their steps. They noticed for the first time the presence of a tide, and that while walking south the water completely obliterated their tracks. They realized then that they had landed, not at Salton Sea, the California desert lake, but on the Gulf of California, Mexico.

They emptied a one-gallon can of oil and filled it with water from the radiator. With this as their drinking water they headed north with two sandwiches and two oranges. The nearest point to the United States boundary was sixty miles to the northeast, although they had no way of knowing this then.

The country over which they tramped was entirely devoid of water and consisted of shifting sand dunes. They gradually discarded their helmets, goggles and aviation coats. The nights were cold, and during the day the men caught the full blast of the Mexican sun.

After eight days of this, Lieutenant Robertson stumbled into the camp of one of the automobile searching parties at a surveyor's tank on the border. He was out on his feet. He was placed inside the car and directed the driver back across the desert to find Colonel Bishop. The automobile became stuck in the sand dunes, and the party continued the rest of the way on foot, following Lieutenant Robertson's tracks.

Colonel Bishop was found thirty miles from the border but was too far gone to walk. An ambulance from Yuma



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managed to get within fifteen miles of him, and the rescuers carried him the distance.

Yes, those were the hedge-hopping days. Those are the days the men of San Diego remember when they look—today—across the bay at North Island. They remember because they took part in the searches.

In another case about the same time, four other North Island fliers were lost in Mexico but were saved from starvation by a herd of steers. These fliers were Lieutenant William R. Sweeley, with Corporal J. C. Railing as passenger; and Lieutenant Daniel F. Duke, with Lieutenant McCarn as passenger.

They had taken off from North Island for Prescott, Arizona. Confused by the weather and having no compass, they headed into Mexico by mistake. Lieutenant Sweeley ran out of gas and made a forced landing. Lieutenant Duke continued southward for some time and, seeing an adobe house, circled it and landed there. The house was empty, so he returned to where the first plane had landed.

He picked out the worst part of the valley and landed in a marsh. His plane turned over on its nose, breaking the propeller and one wing. The gasoline was transferred from the wrecked plane to the good plane, and a take-off was attempted. While trying to taxi to a smooth part of the field, Lieutenant Sweeley bounced into a large hole covered with grass. The plane turned over onto its back, and that was the end of that.

The party of four was marooned without food and with

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no idea of the location, except that it must be somewhere in Mexico. The men limped from the wreck to see what they could find. In the distance they sighted a herd of cattle.

The fliers tried to separate a calf from the herd, but this stampeded the whole herd out of the valley and left the lost party as hungry as before. After dark Lieutenant McCarn and Corporal Railing succeeded in driving a steer into a blind canyon. There they cut its throat with a bearing scraper and returned to the wrecked plane with a quarter of beef.

The beef was boiled in a receptacle made from the aluminum cowling of the plane. They lived on this beef forever, it seemed, and then one day sighted a couple of Mexicans and were guided to the Circle-Bar Ranch. The owner of the ranch was an American. He got them out.

The two North Island fliers murdered by Mexican Indians were Lieutenant Cecil B. Connelly and Lieutenant Frederick Waterhouse. They were flying border patrol from North Island in August 1919 and in bad weather confused the Gulf of California for the coast of California. They thought the west shore of the Gulf was the coast line adjoining San Diego. They followed the west shore of the Gulf southward deeper into Mexico, thinking they were following the San Diego coast northward.

Out of gas, they finally landed on the shore of the Gulf. Part of their story they themselves carved with a jackknife on the fuselage of their plane:

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Flew four hours, five minutes. Turned to our right and flew up coast for two hours and 35 minutes. Didn't see a sign of civilization all the way. Saw boat here. Circled it and landed but it didn't see us. We have no food. Are drinking water from radiator. Tried to catch fish, but after two days gave it up. We have been here five days and are pretty weak. We will mark for days here on left of this sign. We started walking up coast for a day and a half. Ran out of water and turned back. . . .

With marks they indicated the days, all told, as seventeen.

What really happened, according to facts found later, was that the men in the boat did see the plane. They were Indians off Tiburon Island, the last hold-out of the once-famous tribe of Seris. The Indians sighted the fliers, all right, and after a while came ashore and joined them. One of the fliers was in bad shape and unable to walk. They had been living on clams and crabs.

The Indian fishermen (not in a boat exactly, but a blue canoe) carried the fliers south in the canoe to the Bahía de los Angeles and landed them there, later returning and killing them. The Indians robbed the bodies of money, took what clothing they wanted, then left.

The actual fate of the missing lieutenants was not known on North Island until October 1919. The word came after a seaman had reported to the American consul at Nogales that the bodies of two men had been found partly buried at the Bahía de los Angeles. The destroyer *Aaron Ward* was sent immediately south from San Diego, found

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the bodies, and returned with them to San Diego. The rest of the story was pieced together bit by bit afterwards, as such things are, by more and more evidence—and by a confession from one of the Indians.

Today, after thirty years, one cannot help wondering how many lives North Island has given to aviation. The list, even if it could be checked in full, would be too depressing to record—certainly too depressing to record on a monument. Nor do fliers, as we know, care to look at their business that way, especially those who experimented with North Island's first rickety crates. Other industries—railroading, mining, chemistry—have taken their first big tolls, too. Mining, especially, is still taking its toll.

Yet all this is a rough story of the island which is not technically an island, but which dominates San Diego's harbor and remains the central ring of the aerial circus continually under way.

San Diego has other flying fields, of course, including the huge Lindbergh Field adjoining the bay and built from harbor dredgings. Naturally we recall the time when he was having his "Spirit of St Louis" built here inside a former tuna cannery reconverted into a plane factory. And naturally we remember how naïve he seemed and that he actually wanted letters of introduction to carry to Paris, and that he wanted to know ahead of time the cheapest way of reaching Paris from the landing field outside the city and if an interurban was running to Paris from the field, and that he wanted to know if, by selling his plane

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over there, he would have enough money to see a little of Europe and pay his fare back home, too. He was afraid the plane would not sell for much over there because of the depreciation of the flying-hours. Yes, we remember all these conversations because we were around the plane factory and took part in them.

But it so happens that some of us do not share in this national habit of picking out one symbolical hero at the cost of the memory of all other nerry men in the same business, men who not only are forgotten now but a good many of whom are dead from their own experiments. Because of North Island's thirty years, San Diego has seen too many great and courageous and hard-working fliers for the city to be sold completely on one personality as the outstanding deity of them all. And so all of North Island remains San Diego's symbolical personality for aviation. And it will have to be like that. For too many seasons now, too many springs, summers and winters, has the city watched the experimenting planes go up and come down—sometimes altogether too fast. The island's crash siren sounds. The ambulance and fire truck speed from the garage, and the families of the officers' quarters over there are meanwhile left wondering: "Who?"

And maybe someday, centuries from now, historians on this same harbor, in looking back, will change the question from "Who?" to "Why?"

**T**HE BIOGRAPHY OF a true harbor, a natural harbor, can have neither definite beginning nor definite end. The biographer would be playing false to hint at such neatness. He is not dealing with the biography of a person. Of a harbor one cannot say: "Ah, that is the beginning. That is the struggle. That is the climax. And, ah, this will be the grand flourish of the end."

If such were the case, San Diego's growing fleet of modern tuna clippers, with their ingenious devices for refrigeration, with their radio operators, and with the facilities today for fishing across the equator and back—all this would be the climax for the harbor.

The story then would be rounded out with poetic justice to the local Portuguese, whose countryman, Cabrillo, found the harbor—for Spain. Spain is out, but the Portuguese win. Truly a neat story it could be, and a pat one.

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But we know better.

We know that nothing short of a volcano could put a definite end, a precise climax, to the future happenings within a natural indenture of this sort in a coast line which otherwise is exceptionally limited in harbors. There are very few of them between Mexico and Puget Sound. They can be counted on the buttons of one's coat. This means the natural ones, the everlasting ones, not the man-made ones.

In the same light that we know the harbor is as old as the earth formation, and therefore its story is as old as the earth formation, we also know that its story will go on and on till the earth formation is changed.

Perhaps when Cabrillo finally entered the harbor he thought that its climax had been reached. Perhaps when Portola and Serra established a base on the harbor they presumed that the climax had been reached. The hoisting of the first Spanish flag could have been a climax. Or, for our own vanity, the hoisting of the first American flag.

And so in the same manner of thinking—and not altogether absurd—another climax of a fashion could have been reached that morning a few years ago when the first of San Diego's big modernized fishing fleet returned to port after annexing to San Diego's fishing grounds all the open water between the port and Panama, and beyond Panama.

The clipper captains, so many of them Portuguese of long family standing in the harbor, were unaware, of course, of having made harbor history. Such a suggestion,

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no doubt, would have left them stage-struck. But they were aware, in their search for new tuna banks, of having brought closer to San Diego's front yard a great big new Something, including a host of queer islands.

True, the clippers returned from across the equator laden with more animals, birds and reptiles than with fish. The tuna were plentiful but would not bite. The fishermen thought the reason was that the tuna were laying eggs. But today the clippers return there and get their tuna, and the cruises—six weeks, two months, ten weeks—are considered matter-of-fact.

But the fleet's first crossing of the equator was anything but matter-of-fact, and the clipper crews went through the customary ritual, the cook of the clipper *Navigator* serving as Father Neptune. Robed in a fisherman's yellow slicker for a gown, wearing a paper bag for a crown, and wielding a shark spear for a trident, the cook presided, with the bait tank for a throne. He initiated every last man of the crew, even the captain. The cook fed the initiated a drink of salt water mixed with the expected vinegar and pepper. He sloughed their faces with soapsuds from a bucket, he shaved them with the expected wooden razor as big as an axe, and the fleet officially had become globe-trotters.

Within a half-generation these fishermen, still Portuguese most of them, had changed San Diego's fishing tactics from the days when as boys they would accompany their fathers out of San Diego daily in a long boat with long oars and return before night.



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But on this, their first adventure beyond the equator, the fishermen swarmed over the Galápagos group to catch—not fish—but iguanas. They chased them and they caught them, and the crew of the *Stella di Genoa* learned a trick about force-feeding them when aboard—for San Diego. One fisherman would hit the iguana on the head. The iguana would get mad and open its mouth to hiss, and a fish would be poked down the creature's throat with a bamboo stick.

The crews of the *Glory of the Seas* and of the *St Veronica* caught yellow-bellied sea snakes and captured a lizard three feet long. The crew of the *Sacramento* caught some booby birds, and on the rocks off Santa Cruz (of the south) the fishermen captured an albino seal, a dirty white. The men of the *Emma R. S.* caught five giant frigate birds with wingspreads wider than an ordinary eagle's. A special cage later had to be built for them in the San Diego zoo, as the birds would go after food only when on the wing. The fish had to be tossed into the air for them inside the cage. The *Enterprise* returned with four burrowing owls from Clarion Island, the last lava-strewn bulwark between San Diego and the southern hemisphere. The *Lusitania* returned with specimens of the little-known Laysan albatross.

Yes, on that first cruise across the equator the tuna clippers captured just about everything except what they went after—tuna.

As on that first cruise, the clippers still return to San

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Diego bearing queer captives for the San Diego zoo. And the officials of the zoo, in turn, reward the fishermen with honorary certificates as zoologists. These certificates, glossed and pretty, are cherished by the fishermen and framed and kept in the pilothouses. But they have learned by now that all these creatures of the southern islands may be new to them but are not essentially new to the world. They are learning to become real collectors, for a fact, all of which may be one of the reasons why the San Diego zoo, in regard to the southern islands, has become such a living catalogue.

For—to digress a moment from the fishermen—certain yachts have joined in the collecting game, likewise. The fishermen have made these southern islands seem such a part of the harbor's repertoire that now yachts are joining the game. Such spectacles are part of today's waterfront and as such should be recorded for their niche in the picture as a whole, such spectacles as the yacht *Stranger*, for instance, arriving one morning with forty-seven iguanas, a fourteen-foot boa constrictor, two white-tailed deer, a big-horn mountain sheep captured near Los Animas Bay, and a badger named "Dempsey."

Or the yacht *Velero III*, Captain G. Allan Hancock. The yacht has made such a perpetual game of running around down there collecting specimens for the San Diego zoo that her returns to port have the appearance of a circus coming to town. The people of the waterfront collect on the pier. The people of the waterfront look. And some-

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times the people on the waterfront step back—as when the cargo included a new species of poisonous lizard, one which sparkled in the sunlight. But Captain Hancock was so pleased with his new capture, one which science has named after him, that he handled the poisonous lizard while the spectators watched, and while they chorused the proverbial:

“Does it bite? Does it bite?”

“Not very often,” he answered. “It’s too cold today anyway—I think.”

Aboard, too, was an adult deer the size of a jack rabbit, some flightless cormorants, and three specimens of marine snakes which live entirely in the ocean feeding on fish. The information about these marine snakes is that they are venomous and that their poison is compared to that of the cobra. Such may be so, but others would have to vouch for it. Yet what could cause no argument was the fact that one of them had a tuft of barnacles on its tail.

Today, then, San Diego’s tuna fleet of seventy-eight clippers (more being built) cruises a strangely old yet new world and has brought it to the front yard of the harbor. But so long as there is a human race, no doubt, fishermen of a sort will always be here. For they certainly out-time Cabrillo. Their various manners of fishing as they changed through the centuries, as they changed with the incoming and outgoing races, would promise a fuller story of the harbor than could be given by white man’s own time upon it. Yet our own decade, or rather the past twelve years, has

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seen probably the most sudden change in fishing tactics since the aborigines did their fishing, their otter hunting, their fur sealing in tule canoes. We could admit it, or we could argue about it, but at least we rather would have to concede that the change, when it did come, came with a violence.

Generally the tuna clippers work in squadrons. The rivalry is intense between squadrons. The captains of a squadron will agree ahead of time on a secret radio code of their own. When one of the vessels of the squadron locates a tuna school, the captain will inform the others of the squadron by radio code. Rival squadrons will try to "break" the code, as in war, hoping in this manner to close in on the located tuna school. Often enough they do, and sometimes they reach the school ahead of the summoned vessels. To be able to "break" the code of a rival squadron is considered a big joke and also, sometimes, a paying one.

San Diego's two largest tuna clippers of the moment are the *Queen Mary* and the *Normandy*, the latter having a length of 140 feet. Some of the Portuguese and Italian fishing families of San Diego have been here so long that they have their own dynasties. And now that big vessels are the thing instead of rowboats or purse-seiners, the families try to outdo one another in the size of their new vessels and also in the elaboration of the names. Naturally such rivalry has led to no end of financial grief for some of the families, since the original financing generally is shared, or

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underwritten, by the bigger canneries. And the bigger canneries have smart lawyers.

The cost of building a modern tuna clipper can vary between \$100,000 and \$200,000. This will include the sharp-freezing compartments, the auxiliaries, the Diesel, the radio equipment for sending and receiving. But tuna, alas, are still the same old-fashioned tuna. And as such they still have to be caught on the same old-fashioned lines.

Well, not exactly.

For the lines these commercial experts use are short quick lines, and the heavy hooks have no barbs. The tuna releases itself when swung onto the deck. The men work in teams of two or three to the single line, depending on the size of the tuna in the school. Each of the two or three fishermen in the team will have a pole, but the combined poles will have only the one line. The San Diego fishermen have perfected this teamwork by means of a contraption of their own invention, a contraption they call a "bridle." It holds the poles apart and yet at the same time unites them.

When a fisherman describes the size of a school as "one-pole tuna," "two-pole tuna" and sometimes "three-pole tuna," he is but saying that the size of the tuna in that special school required one, two or three men to a team for hauling in each fish. Little tuna do not run with big tuna, nor the big tuna with little tuna, each school remaining of a uniform size. But sizes beyond a "three-pole tuna" are not favored by the commercial fishermen. Tuna too big can

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be more trouble than they are worth. They interfere with the lightning rhythm of a catch and also with the ice packing and all.

Fishing, as these commercial experts perform it, is not for amateurs.

Yet the San Diego fishermen have had to originate their own type of fishing. They have had to change it as conditions changed.

No bait is used on the barbless hooks. Rather the bait—live sardines or live anchovies—is scooped out of the live-bait tank into the tuna school. The chummer is the man or boy who does this, and he has to be an artist. He has to know just how much to toss out and when. If he does not toss the right amount at the right time, the tuna school will lose interest and will sound to the bottom not to reappear. If he tosses too much, the tuna will be receiving so much food they will not be troubled slashing after the rooster feathers attached as decoy to the barbless and baitless hooks. The timing and rhythm of a chummer has to be perfect, and it has to remain perfect all the while the air about him is filled with tuna raining upon the decks.

Also, the chummer, standing with his scoop net on the edge of the live-bait tank, has a dangerous job. Frequently, as the teams of men are pulling, the heavy hook snaps free of a fish and comes sailing back with such speed that it cannot be seen. The chummer can catch the blow. The blow can knock him out, blind him or even kill him.

But a few years ago a chummer, after having had a great

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gash torn out of his head by a hook, waited until he got well enough to walk, then walked into a San Diego repair shop.

“What can I do about it?”

“Have you ever thought of wearing a tin hat?” the repairman asked. So the chummer returned to his tuna clipper and brought out his rain hat. This he left with a tinsmith who made an exact duplicate of it out of tin. This was the start of the tin hats worn today by so many of the fishermen, especially the chummers, when working during the heat of a tuna catch. The tin hats are heavy, and also hot, and they look funny, for no attempt has been made to paint them. They are still the galvanized color.

The fishermen have also rigged out a protection resembling a combination football headguard and baseball mask. The fishermen, especially the chummers again, are not too proud to wear the peculiar affair. They have cut too many heavy hooks out of their shipmates to be proud.

Yet, whether protected or not protected, these chummers (or “bait boys”) have a way of becoming victims of the unpredictable, like the time when the clipper *Invader* was on her maiden voyage. The captain himself had snared an unusually large three-pole tuna, so large that the fishing bridle broke. While repairs were being made to the bridle, he straightened his aching back a moment and realized that the bait boy was nowhere in sight.

The captain climbed to the top of the bait tank to look around, but still he saw no bait boy. The captain presumed

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that the lad must have gone to another part of the vessel on an errand, and he started to climb down to return to fishing. But just then the tip end of the wooden handle of the scoop net poked up to the surface of the tank like a periscope. It stuck up there through the horde of live sardines.

The captain splashed the sardines away as best he could and sprang down. The bait boy had slipped and fallen head first into the tank, frightening the ton of live sardines to the surface, and they had covered him over so tightly he could not rise.

The rooster feathers used in lieu of live bait on their barbless hooks by the fishermen are called "squids." Feathers off the roosters' necks are preferred because these are exactly the right length to resemble a swimming baby squid, which is the tuna's fanciest delicacy. The San Diego fishermen first tried using sea-gull feathers because these were oily and could resist the water. But the colors were wrong. So, taking rooster feathers, they tried what they call "putting pants on them"—the feathers—by wrapping the ends together with transparent skin off sharks or other fish. They used to do this themselves until two former chummers, permanently beached because of hook injuries, began making "squids" and selling them to the clippers. The men bought their feathers from butcher shops and were careful about selecting the colors brown and white. These feathers when blended are the nearest to the color of a baby squid.

The tuna fleet, then, is still the thing. And after one has



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been to the tropical waters aboard a clipper, he has but to shut his eyes to see once again the fury of a catch being enacted: "Tuna! Tuna! Two points—starboard!" followed by the scramble of the fishermen for their bridles and tackle. And then for hour after hour after hour—if the school is a big one and can be "held" by the chummer—the constant rain of the large fish, flopping, angry, bloody, upon the deck.

The fishermen hardly so much as glance around to see if the catch is really off the barbless hook or not before whipping their lines back into the sea for another one. And another. And another.

The fishermen stand upon racks of iron and wood that hang at sea level over the side. With the rolling of the vessel these racks alternate in plunging the fishermen knee deep into the ocean as well as raising them knee high above it. Sharks are attracted to the spot by the wholesale killing, the excitement, the blood dripping from the scuppers. And a gang of blood-excited sharks, no matter what anybody may say, follow no printed rules about attacking or not attacking man. Tuna fishermen (and they should know) have such respect for sharks during the ferocious hours of a tuna haul that a mat is flung across the bars of the racks for protection against snapping teeth. Nor will a tuna fisherman wear red or white rubber boots. They are as cheap to buy as the black ones in the San Diego stores, but the color is too attractive as shark bait and too conspicuous during those mad hours of a tuna haul when sharks are

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snapping. Black remains the preferred color for rubber boots, and not because of style. Nor will a tuna fisherman, during such working moments, rinse his blood-soaked hands. At least he will not rinse them by dipping them into the sea. He has learned.

And so:

As the planes go up and come down, the fishboats come in and go out, and that is a harbor. This harbor.

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## *Epilogue for Tomorrow*

**T**HE KELP HARVESTER droning along out there today—droning along back and forth beyond Point Loma—may furnish the topic for the opening paragraph for the next one who takes up the relay of recording the story of this never-ending harbor. Time will have to settle that matter for him, whoever he may be. For this long kelp bed, once so annoying to the sailing craft of old, is proving so valuable that the state has taken control not only of it but of all the kelp beds off southern California.

A prophet alone would know, and only a prophet should do the guessing. But so many elements valuable in food and medicine (iron, potassium, iodine, chlorine, sodium, agar, vitamins) are being obtained each season from this kelp forest, and put to use, that one wonders about the future of this immediate shore line. And that is all one can do at present—wonder.

The kelp in these kelp forests can measure, they say,

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longer than the tallest redwoods. The record length to date off San Diego is fifteen hundred feet. Also—"they say"—more kelp already is being harvested off San Diego than anywhere else in the world. This may be correct. It may be wrong.

And yet varieties of this same kelp have been used as food in the Orient for a century or more. The saying goes that one third of Japan's natural resources are taken from the sea. One can believe it. Especially can one believe it during any extreme low tide on this shore line when he can see Japanese families—man, woman and eight children—digging among the exposed rocks for squid, for abalone, for mussels, for sea grass and apparently for whatever else is there. During our own time Japanese vessels have been gathering this California kelp, taking it to Japan, processing it, then selling it back to the United States in many forms. But the harbor of San Diego has its own kelp factories now. The story may turn out, in the end, to be a little story. Or it may turn out to be a very, very big one.

If so, another cycle will have been completed, a cycle of wider compass than that between Cabrillo and his Portuguese countrymen with their new clippers. For the Orientals, we have liberty to assume, were the first to penetrate the secrets of this coast. We know that the aborigines pointed out to the first Spaniards odd bits of wreckage, strange but Oriental—junks carried across by accident, perhaps, in the same Black Stream which later was to carry the Manila galleons towards their first landfall, California.

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So they come in and they go out, and sometimes they come back again—including Oriental junks—such being the timeless rhythm of a harbor. For the Oriental junks already have been back, even as late as the beginning of the present harbor generation. Today's clipper captains, many of them, as boys when pulling a long oar with their fathers would see these fishing junks berthing in the port and would have a competitive dislike of them. The occupants knew too well how to use each item of these waters, including the food and medicine of the kelp forests. And so the cycles roll on and on.

Tomorrow's harbor?

What will be the next contribution—the next paragraph to be added to the four-hundred-years-and-more of paragraphs? No matter. The same Point Loma which saw them all—the Spaniards, the English, the Orientals, the Russians, the Portuguese, and ourselves of course—the same Point Loma which saw them all will still be the harbor's headland. Those weird ten miles of Silver Strand, or at least most of it, will still be the miles of Silver Strand. Fourteen pelicans in their customary single file have just ambled by from out the antediluvian period to the present, keeping slow step with their wings. The natural veil-haze hangs over the Coronados, the breeze remains from the northwest, the curlews are back down on the beach. Tomorrow will be sunny, then.

A black-legged egret has landed on the reef, pretending to be watching for minnows, but most likely just to stand

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there in all haughtiness the morning through. And at twenty the night after tomorrow night the grunion run.

The shore line is still the same shore line, then, and Portola would recognize it.

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