LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS CORRAL
The Branding Iron
J. GOODMAN

SEPTEMBER 1983 LOS ANGELES CORRAL NUMBER 152

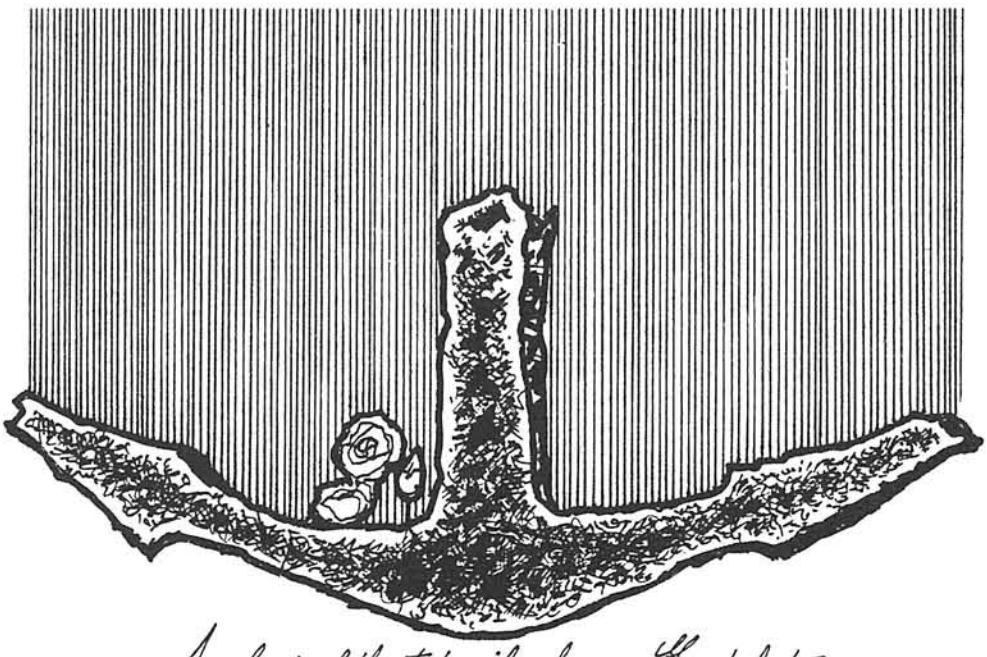
An Anchor in Search of a Ship

by Richard W. Cunningham

Around 30 miles from the Pacific at latitude 34° 05′ 30″ North and longitude 118° 06′ West in the garden of the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel, the brutalized remains of a rusty, crusted 19th Century anchor stands a lonely vigil in a bower of roses; an unlikely final resting place for anyone or anything whose origins were a part of the sea.

However, this indignity is not as disgraceful as the claims made regarding the artifact's origins; origins contrived by well-meaning landlubbers who have made it an anchor in search of a ship.

This confusion is certainly not unique to the Mission, but is actually rather common to almost any popular recitation of the



Anchor of the topsail schooner Guadalupe

RICHARD W B CUNNINGHAM 3

The Branding Iron

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THE BRANDING IRON solicits aritcles of 1,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

Corral Chips

Ray Wood speaks to the Kiwanis Club of Pasadena at their regular luncheon on June 22. His topic is "Ina Coolbrith, California's First Poet Laureate." He also receives accolades from the City of Los Angeles as the Human Relations Commission awards him a Certificate of Merit for "outstanding volunteer service." Ray's latest article is "How to Become an *Investigador* at the *Archivo de Indias,* Sevilla, Spain," in the Spring 1983 issue of *Biblio-Cal Notes* . . . C.M. *Harriet Weaver* is the author of *Redwood Country,* a full guide with interpretive material and maps to the redwoods of the Coast and the Big Trees of the Sierras. The book includes color photographs by noted photographer Dave Swanlund and is available from Chronicle Books (San Francisco) for $8.95 . . . C.M. *Gene Bear* serves as emcee and auctioneer for the first annual "Super Bowl of Chili" state cook-off of the International Chili Appreciation Society. Winners will advance to the Championship Cook-off in Terlingua, Texas . . . "Visitors," the poem by *Tony Lehman* which won first prize in the Orange County Poetry Contest last year, has been printed in the Summer 1983 issue of *Electrum,* a quarterly magazine devoted to outstanding contemporary poetry . . .

At the request of the American Scandinavian Association, A.M. *Sig Demke* speaks to fifty teenage exchange students from Spain and West Germany on the history of the American West . . . A.M. *Dick Logan* serves as a lecturer on the "Love Boat" last summer—aboard the *Island Princess* cruising the Inside Passage to Alaska. Lectures featured

(Continued on Page Eleven)

An Anchor . .

bonafide, "That's the way it was", homogenized history of the romantic Californias.

As a case in point, midway in the celebration of the Los Angeles Bi-Centennial, *Westways* published a Francis J. Weber classic on the founding of the fabled Pueblo in which the good Monseigneur flushed out much of the folklore surrounding a simple event that had previously been fleshed out by effluorescent essayists who cited practically everybody but the Royal Scots Guards Pipe Band in attendance on that end-of-summer day in 1781 when the first immigrant settlers arrived at the end of the trail, and the beginning of the new Spanish frontier outpost of Los Angeles.

Unfortunately popular, creatively overstated, eyewitness-like accounts of Californiana are not limited to the founding of El Pueblo de Los Angeles or the "Anchor" because between the emergence of Helen Hunt Jackson and the passing of John Steven McGroarty, the coals of popular California history were fanned to wildfire proportions by a procession of hopeless romantics driven by literary invention dedicated to the conversion of one line citations of hard data into imagined scenes and contrived conversations spoken by casts of thousands dressed by a staff of the likes of Western Costume.

The dilemma stems from three basic sources: the repetition of twice-told tales by the legion of descendants of the principals of the Spanish and Mexican eras, memoirs dictated or penned by superannuated survivors recounting events three to five decades in the past, or authors swept up in the gushing, colorful style of a period that produced classics of the genre of *Tom Swift and the Motorboat Boys.*

Despite the fact the material makes for pleasant reading, it is semi-history that drives the serious researcher to intemprance in the separation of folklore or color from reality.

Unfortunately much of this stuff has crept into bibliographies or lists that make no judgement regarding fact or fancy, thus forcing the serious researcher to spend endless, unnecessary hours assaying the worth of the material.

My particular psychosis, the maritime Californias to 1848, is one of these traumatized subject headings and my favorite story, that of Joe Chapman and the topsail schooner *Guadalupe,* has been in "intensive care" since 1877 when a Bancroft field interviewer recorded the senile recollections of the bitter seventy-six year old California pioneer, Michael White, D.B.A. Don Miguel Blanco. And in pursuing the phantom Guadalupe, it seems practically every succeeding reference runs a parallel course to that of the folklore generated by White.

A classic example of the dilemma occurs in a paper read 4 March 1895 which was then published in the *Quarterly of the Historical Society of Southern California.* Author Frank J. Polley sticks to the facts in his "Shipbuilding at the San Gabriel Mission", until he describes the vessel's launch at which point he switches to the fantasy mode, a fantasy based on a sentence in Alfred Robinson's *Life in California.*

Robinson observes: "A launch was to take place at San Pedro . . . and as an affair was considered quite an important era in the history of the country, many were invited from far and near to witness it.", while Polley in a fit of creative genius states; "Boats flying to an fro; women and children crowding the docks, lining the bluffs and all taking in the general excitement"; a nice bit of background, but not quite the reality.

Actually when the *Guadalupe* slipped down the launchways, 14 January 1831, there was no wharf at San Pedro, nor at any other port in Alta California. Further, Polley's colorful small craft roving to and from were literally nonexistant in Alta California until the Gold Rush era and about the only aspect of his account that makes sense is a later-mentioned shoreside fiesta, a common occurrence as predictable as the drop of a sombrero.

This state of confusion is not limited to the past, because according to the staff of the Mission San Gabriel Arcangle between 5 and 10,000 visitors pass through the turnstiles of the Mission's exhibit area on a given year where the sponsors unwittingly serve to perpetuate the *Guadalupe* myth.

As the visitor leaves the Mission Gift Shop and enters the garden, a kaleidescopic array

. . . *Page Three*

of Mission-period visual experiences unfold; tanning vats, tallow furnaces, carefully tended flowers, a tiny *horno,* a gentle Campo Santo, a harmless, rusting cannon in a rotting carriage and the object of my dismay, the brutalized remains of an anchor.

The deeply erroded beast is mounted on a masonry base accompanied by a copy panel executed in "Signpainters Mission Text" which reads:

"Anchor of the 99-ton top-sail schooner, *Guadalupe.* Built here in 1830 by Joseph Chapman, Michael White, Thomas Paine and Mission Indians. Dismantled she was hauled to the roadstead of San Pedro on Carretas (carts) reassembled and launched. The first ship built in California from native materials.

"In 1831, Don 'Miguel Blanco', Michael White, master, sailed her to Mazatlan and San Blas, Mexico with Mission goods.

"Mission blacksmiths have since melted and cut off pieces of the anchor to make hinges, hoes, nails and other articles."

This seemingly straightforward legend, when eventually replaced, should be enshrined as a classic example of folklore masquerading as history, a classic in the genre of a "B Western" press release tapped with the sparkling magic wand of fantasy.

Dismantling the text, top to bottom there are two bloopers in the first sentence.

The anchor is not that of the Guadalupe, an error I'll address later, and the displacement of the vessel was not 99 tons.

The 99-ton statement was the handiwork of Michael White, who in the forty-six years between the vessel's launch and his Bancroft interview, managed in respinning the yarn to better than double the actual displacement.

Alfred Robinson who was a great word painter of the California scene of the period, strong on color, but weak on statistics, estimated 60 tons, a fairly good, educated guess.

But the reality is that when Guadalupe dropped her hook at Mazatlan 31 December 1831, Mexican customs officers rated her as displacing 45 tons; and the world's customs officials, have since the days of Hyram of Tyre, been notorious for over, rather than underrating, to increase port fees.

Guadalupe was launched at San Pedro 14 January 1831, which when considering the logical processes that include logging, seasoning, frame, strake and spar production, framing, planking, dismantling, draying thirty miles and reassembling suggest that the hull was dismantled rather than built at the Mission in 1830.

The mention of Chapman, White, Paine and Mission Indians is accurate, yet were the vagueries of the libel law relating to sins of omission applied, Nathaniel Prior, Richard Laughlin, William A. Richardson and Samuel Prentice, would have a pat case against the sign's author.

This roster does not include William Wolfskill, a sometimes conjectured participant, who in other conjectures is alleged to have built his own vessel.

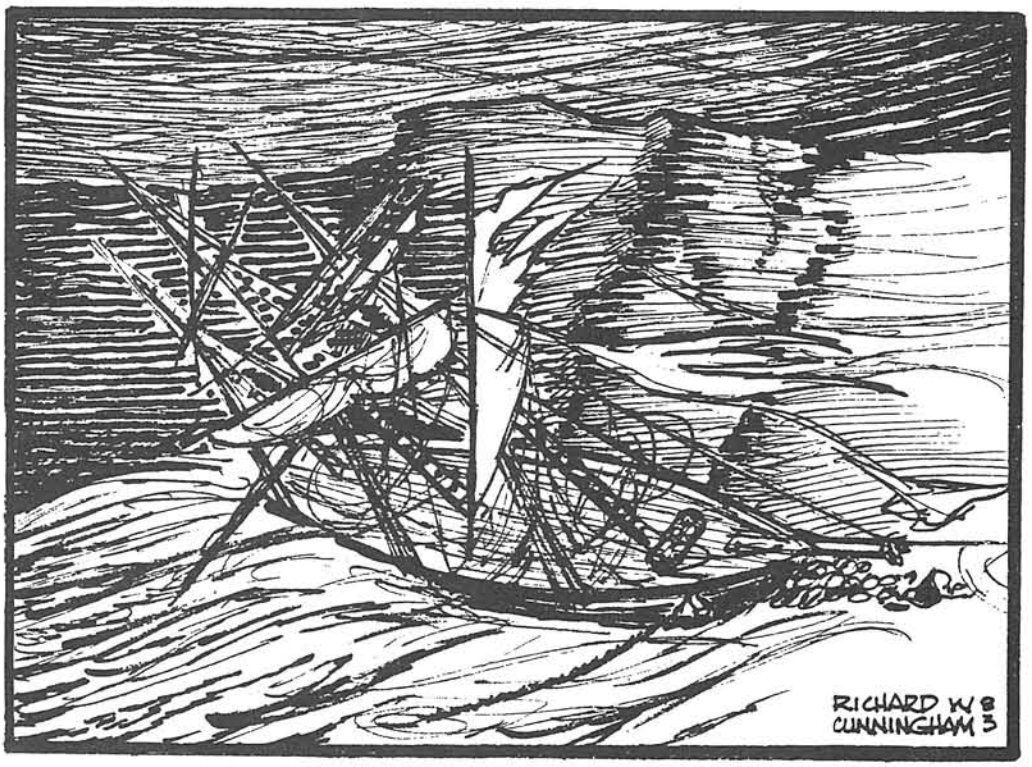
Wolfskill's biographer, I. H. Wilson, obviously working from patriarchal pioneer recall, tells us this inventive California immigrant a product of Kentucky, arrived at San Gabriel in 1831 where in concert with Fr. Jose Bernardo Sanchez, he whipped out a 70 foot, 60 ton hull which was christened *Refugio* and bent to the task of hunting sea otter in 1832.

This ignores the fact *Guadalupe* was launched in January 1831, a task that kept Chapman and his crew of Gringo mechanics (the only available on the Coast) up to their armpits until the end of the month, which would suggest some considerable presure to frame, finish and launch another hull by summer, even late summer.

Timbers for both the Plaza Church and the Guadalupe were cut at Church Canyon, the closest source of Big Cone Spruce in the San Gabriels, and even if Wolfskill had hired Paul Bunyon to cut the sticks and Babe the blue ox to haul them up to the ridge line and snake them down the western slopes to the Mission, he'd have played hell launching a hull by summer.

The pioneers performed some unusual tasks, but not this one. Had the Wolfskill folktale been reality, the loggers breaking their backs up in the San Gabriels would have been double timing around their ditty-bags until their tongues hung out and the sawyers, those working in the sawpits would have required life jackets.

Page Four . . .



Christmas Eve 1829, San Pedro, California

Further, had the *Refugio* ever reached the point of reality, its reported 70 foot length and 60 ton displacement would have resulted in a barge rathern than a sailing vessel.

And, by this point in the text, the reader is treated to the hilarious intelligence that *Guadalupe* was the first ship built of native materials in California, when in reality that the first vessel constructed of native materials laid down in the Californias was the balandra El Truinfo de la Cruz, launched at Mulege in Baja in 1719 by Juan de Ugarte, S.J.

However, if the purist opts for Alta California, the Yard at Fort Ross must be considered because betweeen 1820 and 1827 the "Cossacks" launched four brigs of native materials ranging from 160 to 200 tons, as well as two barques sold to Bay Area missions.

Along with the launchings of the Rumiantsev, Budlakov, Volga and Kiahtka, California shipbuilding was also underway at San Francisco Bay where in 1823 William Anthony Richardson launched the Maria Antonia, a Bay freighter which is reputed to have made one run to Sitka Alaska.

Then in 1829 the schooner *Santa Barbara,* owners W. G. Dana and Jose de la Guerra, was launched at Mescaltitlan and taken to sea by Benjiaman Foxen. This event prompted renaming the site, Goleta—in Spanish, the Schooner.

And finally we come to number nine, the *Guadalupe.*

The last gaff is the statement that White or Miguel Blanco was master of the vessel. He was aboard and may have stood tiller watches, but the skipper of record was William Anthony Richardson as verified in correspondence between the Maritime Administrator at Mazatlan and the Minister of Hacienda dated 26 January 1832.

On the positive side, the legend's spelling and punctuation appear to be correct and the crusty cannibalized anchor was certainly brutzlied by Mission blacksmiths, but it was

. . . *Page Five*

not one of Guadalupe's bower hooks.

If there were no additional data available, the claim of the anchor's origins is easily challenged by the questions, "If this is the Guadalupe's anchor, why did Joe Chapman take off and leave it at San Gabriel?" or "If it was catted at the heads of the Guadalupe, how on earth did it find its way back when the vessel was struck from the list of ships?"

And as an aside, her final resting place or disposition is the only piece of the puzzle I've yet to put in place.

But these points are not as significant as the sledge hammer reality, that until now has been ignored by thousands of viewers: the brute's size.

I cannot recall the number of times I visited the Mission before the obvious became obvious.

The remains of the butchered shank run 30 inches in length and 7 inches by 7 inches in cross section, while the 7 inch square crown measures 90 inches between the points, where the palms were hacked off.

According to the weights of material cited in *Kent's Mechanical Engineering Handbook,* these statistics, when reduced to volume measure result in a weight of 1242 pounds, as is.

Comparing the characteristics of the pig-iron cadaver with surviving mint-condition artifacts of the period dictates that the venerable hook originally tipped the scale at around 3000 pounds, which does not coincide with the standard practice of fitting out a vessel of 45 tons, now or then.

Two best bowers of 3000 pounds each, swung from the catheads would have taken Guadalupe down by the bow, yet the survivor is certainly a product of the period.

Despite the fact iron in any form was precious on the California coast in Mission and Rancho times the anchor's presence still presents a dilemma.

First the period of Guadalupe's construction was the "bitter end of the running line" of secularization, which dictates its acquisition at that time since the later tennants maintained no manufacturing operations.

San Gabriel is 30 carretta miles from San Pedro and hauling 3000 pounds of scrap iron on a screeching ox cart cannot be considered in the light of a daily routine, which leaves the cynic the final shot—ships sporting anchors of 1½ tons did not cruise about the world donating their ground tackle to needy iron-poor landlubbers.

And with all the variables in place the reality finally starts to come into focus.

Only one vessel of any consequence was wrecked at San Pedro during the decade and Bancroft cites her as the, "Danube, Amer. Ship from N.Y.: Sam Cook, master; arr. early in 1830, and was soon wrecked at S. Pedro; hull sold for $1761 and cargo for $3316 in Feb. to Dana and Guerra," which until recently has been the extent of our statistical knowledge of the vessel.

In pursuit of more detailed information I turned, as I have in the past to Dr. John Kemble, the academic "sea pappy" of Pacific Coast maritime history, and typical of any of our transactions he not only suggested a resource but recited the address of a then, new agency of the National Archive.

An inquiry produced immediate results that set in motion a series of breakthroughs that finally proved that the San Gabriel anchor is one of those of the Brig Danube.

Customs House records procurred from the National Archive show the brig as being of New York registry, getting underway from the Port of New York 14 November 1828, skippered by Sam Cook commanding a crew of 28.

This first break suggested the possibility of Marine Insurance, which led me to the Huntington Library where a copy of the *Lloyds Registry* for 1832 shows the Brig Danube rated as A-1, owned by Wood and Co. of New York displacing 274 tons.

Shortly after acquiring this data the Serra Library of the San Diego Historical Society announced acquisition of Adel Ogden's six volume, unpublished manuscript *Trading Vessels on the California Coast 1786-1848,* which prompted a visit where I learned Danube was carrying a cargo of trade goods for Daniel Coit, a Yankee entrepreneur of Lima, Peru who had contracted with William Hartnell of Monterey to represent him as supercargo.

This suggested the possibility of pay dirt in the Hartnell story, which fortuitously

served to tie up the loose ends, putting the last tessarie bits of the mosaic into place.

One third of the net profits offered Hartnell by Daniel Coit, delighted the Monterey merchant, who in financial straits, viewed the opportunity as a sort of last chance to make it big on the coast.

When Danube cleared the Port of New York in November 1828 Hartnell was advised the vessel would put in at Monterey sometime in March 1829, and elated with the prospects he contacted his legion of friends of the Missions and Ranchos appraising them of the good news.

Meanwhile back at the Mission San Gabriel, a reformed Boston pirate, Joseph Chapman and a hard charging Franciscan priest, Fr. Jose Bernardo Sanchez were hard at work acting out the scenes of the other half of the scenario.

Various reports of Sanchez suggest that he was actually a Jesuit in disguise; run up by Mexican officials for smuggling (he beat the rap), possessed of an active sense of humor and reported by Hugo Ried as a crack shot, the Franciscan priest was not only properly pious in his offices, but a top notch shepherd, commander and entrepreneur as well.

Chapman, a tall, blonde Yankee, who early on was apprenticed as a Boston shipwright, entered California history as a member of Pirate Hippolyte Bouchard's assault forces in 1818.

Coming ashore at Refugio he was taken by the locals, later parolled and in the ensuing years left a string of monuments to Yankee ingenuity between the Missions Santa Ynez and San Gabriel—two grist mills, the roof of the church at El Pueblo de Los Angeles, charcoal kilns and a vineyard on the outskirts of Los Angeles.

It is no wonder the priest and the pirate became fast friends, and that when Sanchez had had it up to the cowl with tin-horn Mexican Colonial officials, he turned to Chapman to set his plans in motion, an aspect of the saga that unless some rare bit of correspondence turns up, will remain shrouded in the mists of the past.

Before his passing Thomas Temple assured me that he had never turned up a single reference to the Guadalupe in any of the Mission San Gabriel's records, and this fits with the tenor of the times.

Sanchez was fighting for the survival of the Mission system, was fed up with available coastal resupply and transportation and was itching to get in on a piece of the waning sea otter action.

The answer to his dilemma was a ship, which if purchased outright, would have blown his cover, so the ingeneous padre, using Indios from the Mission Bull Gang, Mission mad money and old-fashioned China Station Cumshaw put the project in the hands of Joe Chapman.

Since I can find no chronology of the project, I fell back on the logical chain of transactions which include: drafting plans, cutting the plank, mast and spar stock in Church Canyon and the frame and tree-nail material on the foothill slopes of the San Gabriels, droughing to the Mission, seasoning the Big Cone Spruce and Oak, dimensioning timbers, lofting the planks and frames, manufacturing tools non existent in California, laying the keel, setting the stem and stern posts, soaking the masts and spars, building a steam chest for bending strakes, assembling the rough hull, and dismantling and hauling hundreds of numbered members to a make do yard constructed at San Pedro where Alfred Robinson reported her launch.

Mission neophytes labelled Chapman, El Diablo, because he could forecast the direction of the fall of a tree, and based on my reconstruction, predicated on an inverse timetable working back from the January 1831 launch, he was cutting timber in Church Canyon in 1827.

All of the ongoing construction activities had to be based on faith in God because at the outset, the 45 ton topsail schooner would one day require a suit of sails, running gear, a galley, ground tackle, marine hardware, navigational instruments and all of the standard paraphenalia of a seagoing vessel, necessaries unavailable in the Californias.

Danube did not arrive at Monterey in March 1829 and Hartnell's visions of recovery were blown out of the water when the Down East trader *Brookline* represented by "Old four eyes", Alfred Robinson, dropped her

. . . *Page Seven*

hook at Monterey in April.

Hartnell, one of California's gentler, more delightful pioneers agonized until September 1829 when Sam Cook, reputed to have been a part owner, ran aback and let go the Danube's best bower at Monterey.

As any sailor of the California coast knows, the weather and state of the sea commence an annual seasonal period of deterioration at this time each year making sailing to and fro between the Golden Gate and San Diego a questionable practice, and particularly if the activity requires anchoring in unprotected holding grounds.

Hartnell, ever the optomist, described Danube's cargo as splendid and by December she had worked her way south to San Pedro where she rode at anchor on Christmas eve of 1829.

Sam Cook was ashore at El Pueblo that night, a guest of Antonio Rocha and while he participated in the Posada, a southeaster rifled down Cajon Pass, busted out across the Los Angeles Basin, roared out over San Pedro and drove Danube on the rocks.

Christmas day the crew bent to discharging the cargo and squaring away the running gear and by New Year's eve had jury-rigged a patch and were waiting to float her off on the high tide when a second Santana swept over the unprotected Bay and pounded the crippled brig a second and last time, leaving her a hopeless wreck.

As mentioned in correspondence between pioneers Gale and Cooper, the wreck was auctioned in February, 1830 and the successful bidder, W.G. Dana, paid $425 for the hull and $1575 for the spars and rigging.

Early in my investigation I was led to believe Danube foundered on Dead Man's Island, but later study of early charts proves this view to be more folklore.

Only an idiot would have anchored that far offshore and further the depths and conditions of the bottom off of San Pedro's Hide House where R. H. Dana's brig *Pilgrim* and all the other visitors anchored, was the only logical holding ground, suggesting *Danube* was driven ashore somewhere in the neighborhood of today's Cabrillo Beach.

This marine disaster was a staggering loss to Coit, Hartnell and Cook, but on the other hand, a blessing in the eyes of Chapman and Sanchez, because now all of the formerly non existent hardware was available on a beach 30 miles from the Mission.

No other ship construction project of any consequence occurred on the Southern Coast in the ensuing decade and parallel to other aspects of the Guadalupe story that involve financial considerations, no record has surfaced that verifies a Dana/Sanchez transaction. But you can bet your last *real* Sanchez cut a deal with the Santa Barbara merchant and commenced hauling salvage to the Mission immediately, which brings us back to the anchor.

On an extended voyage of those days a well fitted ship would have carried at least two bower anchors, the heaviest aboard, along with two sheet anchors of equal weight, no less than one stream anchor, at 1/3 of the heft of the foregoing, plus two kedge anchors at half the weight of the stream anchor.

Consequently when Guadalupe smoked down the ways at Stingaree Gulch in San Pedro 14 January 1831, her ground tackle surely consisted of the two kedge anchors from the Danube, which suggests a lively activity at the forges of San Gabriel as hyper-active Mission smiths worked out their version of the Anvil Chorus chewing up over 6 tons of pig-iron available in the five remaining hooks.

Therefore I suggest a new sign, one that might read:

"Between 1827 and 1830 a Boston shipwright, Joseph Chapman, working with Fr. Jose Bernardo Sanchez, supervised the construction of the 45-ton topsail schooner, *Guadalupe,* at the Mission San Gabriel. Mission Indians, Michael White, Thomas Paine, Nathaniel Pryor, Richard Laughlin, William Richardson and Samuel Prentice all bent to the task and in the spring of 1830 dismantled the hull which was loaded on carrettas and hauled to San Pedro.

"Reassembled at Stingaree Gulch, she was launched January 14, 1831.

"After working the local coast she cruised to Mazatlan and San Blas in December 1831 commanded by William Anthony Richardson.

"This bower anchor, one of five cannibalized by Mission blacksmiths to manufacture

marine hardware for the *Guadalupe* and workaday hardware for the Mission came from the 274-ton Yankee brig *Danube* wrecked on the shores of San Pedro the night of December 31, 1829."

Paul Bailey and the Westernlore Press The First 40 Years —with Annotated Bibliography

by Ronald Dean Miller

The Sagebrush Press is proud to announce the forthcoming publication concerning this important Western publisher and author. Paul Bailey and his Westernlore Press have provided the literary world with important and informative works, both original productions and reprintings of scarce volumes from earlier years. To honor the long and productive career of Paul Bailey, a review of his life and times is presented in this work.

Complementing the biography of Bailey himself is a multi-faceted bibliography, replete with annotations. For research and general information, this bibliography is presented in a manner which will enable one to locate a Westernlore imprint by author, title, under a series listing, or those written by Bailey. This is a much needed reference tool for study in the field of Western books, which places the work as a valuable item on at least two points: interesting biography and useful bibliography.

Paul Bailey and the Westernlore Press, is limited to 1,000 copies or less (the exact number yet to be determined). It is illustrated, printed letterpress, approximately 100 pages in length and cloth bound. Place your order now and be assured of securing a copy. The author will autograph your copy upon request. Completion date is, tentatively: December 15, 1983.

THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

JULY

David Hornbeck, geography professor at California State University, Northridge, spoke on "The California Missions," focusing on the productivity and success of the mission system. During the mission period, 1770-1834, the California missions had a variety of experiences in their operations. Missions coordinated the work activities of the Indians, including growing wheat and maize, caring for livestock, and supplying labor for pueblos and presidios. Hornbeck stressed that it is inaccurate to generalize about all the missions, as different missions tended to be

Photograph - Frank Q. Newton

David Hornbeck

more successful in some endeavors than in others in maintaining the neophyte population and utilizing agricultural lands. A series of slides illustrated the productivity of individual missions. At the height of their operations the missions provided agricultural surpluses to presidios and pueblos, and did so profitably. The original goals of bringing civilization and Christianity to the Indians gave way after 1820 to profitable commercial operations, argued Hornbeck, who credited the provinces isolation with the success of the missions. When the Mexican government pressed for secularization, the mission system's days were numbered; and the productive lands were eventually taken over by rancheros for their own use and profit. After decades of decay and deterioration, the missions generally are tourist attractions, their original vast estates long carved up and their work functions forgotten.

AUGUST

Associate Member Norman Neuerberg addressed the Corral on "Secrets the Stones Tell Us," describing the detective work that must be done in restoring the California missions. Focusing mainly on San Juan Capistrano, Neuerberg described how he has carefully scraped plaster and whitewash off of mission walls to get at the secrets of what lies beneath. San Juan Capistrano offers some unique challenges to restoration and reconstruction because its church was destroyed in an earthquake in 1812. For most of the 19th century the church lay in ruins; by 1894, when a painting allegedly depicting the mission and church was rendered, it consisted mainly of the artist's imagination so far as the church was concerned. Twentieth-century excavations have also resulted in artists' speculative drawings as to what the original buildings looked like.

Neuerberg's excavation and restoration work have provided important clues as to the outline of the original mission structures. A new church is now under construction; building code requirements make reconstruction of the old one an impractical task. Neuerberg

Photograph - Frank Q. Newton

Deputy Sheriff Bill Warren, speaker Norman Neuerberg and Sheriff Powell Greenland.

showed a number of slides illustrating how historical photographs have aided in understanding the evolution of different mission rooms such as the San Juan Capistrano gift shop, at one time rented out as an artist's studio. Other slides showed how Neuerberg's patient scraping of plaster and whitewash off of walls has revealed long-forgotten designs and colors, and his efforts have also revealed the location of furniture, wall cabinets, and paintings. The work has proved invaluable in the restoration work now going on at the missions.

SEPTEMBER

The program for the 1983 Rendezvous offered some changes from past events. The most obvious was the erection of a pavilion tent to offer shade from the September heat. In addition to the bidding on Western books and art work, the Corral held a "silent auction" on a number of items. Tom McNeill was guest of honor in recognition of his many services to the Corral. Dr. Alden Miller once again offered the hospitality of his home, and a convivial time was had by all.

A FEW NOTES ABOUT THOMAS S. McNEILL

by Everett Hager

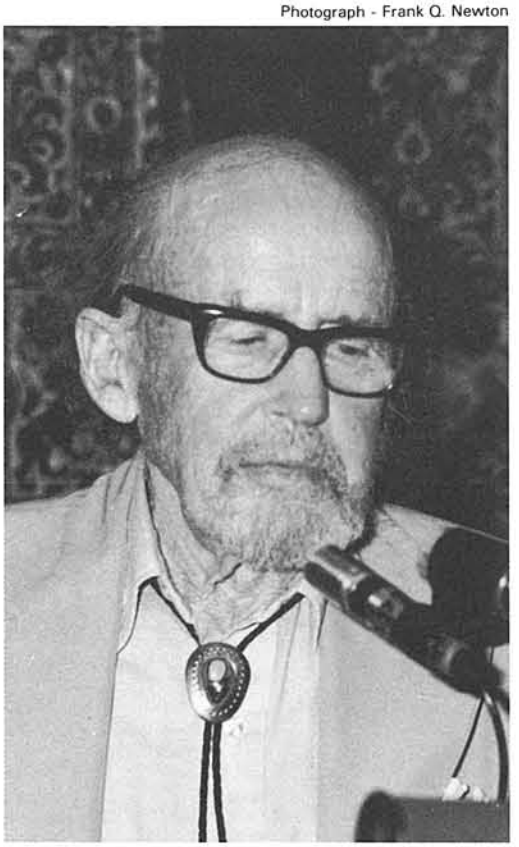
It was at a special author's book and art exhibition in the Palos Verdes Book Shop, "The Shore Bird," when I met Thomas S. McNeill. Our friends, Duncan and Dorothy Gleason, had asked us to assist in serving as

co-hosts for the event.

In talking with Tom his keen knowledge about Western painters made him stand out as someone who should become acquainted with fellow Westerners of the Los Angeles Corral. As my guest, Tom attended his first meeting at Taix's. It wasn't long before his enthusiastic support for the Corral as a Corresponding Member that he became an Active.

Tom regularly pitched in and worked with his fellow-members in arranging various artistic exhibits. As early as 1966 he helped to arrange a special exhibit of the Taos School of Western Art and soon established the "Hobby Corner," which developed into the outstanding monthly exhibits which added so much to the subject of that evening's speaker. Members shouldn't forget his dedication to those excellent "round-ups" of Western Art for the Corral's Rendezvous and auctions. He served as a Wrangler and as your former Librarian.

Photograph - Frank Q. Newton



Thomas S. McNeill Honored Guest at the 1983 Rendezvous.

Tom's articles to the *Branding Iron* include: "Duncan Gleason: the athlete painter," "Gerald Cassidy: International famous painter and lithographer," "Joseph Henry Sharp: 70 years of Western painting," and "Palomino Ponies...Saved and Restored." His two contributions to the *Brand Book* have merited much praise and attention, "E.A. Burbank: Painter of Indians, 1858-1949," for *Brand Book* Number 13, and "An Artist's View of Los Angeles, 1895 to 1959," about Duncan Gleason, appeared in *Brand Book* Number 15..

His never failing assistance to the many requests from students of Western Art, as well as compilers of various art exhibitions throughout the West and donation of time and effort for many museum catalogues and books have all added to his prestige as one of the more knowledgeable of Western Art collectors.

Corral Chips...

the Indians, glaciers, and gold rushes. . . . *Dwight Cushman* addresses the Canoga Park Friends of the Library on September 30. He discusses the Civil War and displays several artifacts and relics of the period . . . C.M. *Alexander J. Guthrie* displays his sculptures of recycled materials, including such objects as old license plates and metal scraps, at the Designs Recycled Gallery, September 10-October 1 . . . *Abe Hoffman* condenses his Brand *Book No. 16* article on the Griffith Park fire for publication on the Op-Ed page of the *Los Angeles Times,* October 3, 1983. He also repeats his program on Martin Aguirre, which he presented to the Corral last December, for the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society on October 19 . . .

C.M. *Howard Nelson* is the author of *The Los Angeles Metropolis,* published by Kendall/Hunt, intended both as a text and "for anyone with a curiousity about the nature, evolution, and operation of this complex and important area." . . . Three members of the Corral collaborate with the Pacific Palisades Historical Society in the writing of *Pacific Palisades: Where the Mountains Meet*

. . . *Page Eleven*

the Sea, a history of that community. C.M. *Ed Carpenter* wrote the Foreword; *Ernie Marquez* presented a fine portrayal of the rancho, its history, and an earlier life style; and A.M. *Dick Logan* described the physical setting and natural history . . .

C.M. *Al Shumate* edits and writes an introduction to *Boyhood Days: Ygnacio Villegas' Reminiscences of California in the 1850s,* published in a limited edition by the California Historical Society . . . The Gran Quivira XII was held in and about Monterey on October 6-8. Head Honcho *Bill Burkhart* deftly ramrodded the whole show, aided by his charming wife, Barbara. A.M. *Norm Neuerberg* presented a paper on Mission Wall Paintings. The following day he served as guide for a tour of San Juan Bautista Mission, where he is supervising the restoration of its wall paintings. *Walt Wheelock* merely relaxed and enjoyed the bash . . .

Photograph - Frank Q. Newton

BERT H. OLSON

Bert H. Olson

Herbert Hjalmar Olson was born in Upper Peninsula, Michigan. After successful years in New York, he moved to California to join the Winne & Sutch Organization, dealers in fabrics and household decorations. All of his business years in California were spent with this company, for which he later became vice-president and general manager.

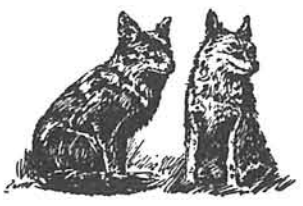
His love for the West soon manifested itself in research and collecting, and when The Westerners came into being, he became one of the very early members. He was the 5th Sheriff of the Los Angeles Corral and for more than 35 years, he served them in one or another leadership capacity.

This genial pipe-smoking Bert was a "Doer". His principal fields of interest embraced three on which he wrote articles for our Brand Books: the 1842 gold discovery in Placerita Canyon of Southern California; the Sierra snow camp of the tragic Donner Party; and the relics of the overlanders in the 40-mile Humboldt Sink desert of Nevada. And Bert's research for his articles was not merely of the arm-chair variety—he tramped the ground of the sites about which he wrote, and in doing so, he experienced near sunstroke in the desert. Bert also wrote for the Branding Iron, and he served 30 years of meticulous record keeping as Keeper of the Chips for the Corral.

Bert was genuinely interested in people and maintained a friendly relationship with all who knew him. When he retired from his business career about two years ago, he and his wife Vivian moved from their long-time home in Beverly Hills to an attractive new home in Carmel Valley where they enjoyed together their new life of retirement. On October 21, 1983, after a very brief illness, Bert died of heart failure.

The Los Angeles Corral will be forever in his debt for his loyalty and devotion and his steadfast desire to help create a sense of pride in membership in the organization he loved so much.

Paul Galleher and Arthur H. Clark



An Overland Trip to Southern California — Letter No. X.

by Anna Marie Hager

Robert J. Woods, a former Los Angeles Corral Sheriff introduced us to an unusual collection of letters and some years later we had the good fortune to acquire a copy for ourselves.

D. L. Phillips' "Letters from California: its mountains, valleys, plains, lakes, rivers, climate and productions. Also its railroads, cities, towns and people, as seen in 1876," is a remarkable viewpoint of a father induced to visit the Pacific Coast in search of a climate which would restore the health of his son who had been pronounced incurably ill.

During the time he was in California, Phillips sent letters to the Illinois State *Journal,* in Springfield, who later produced them in book form in 1877, comprising of some 171 pages.

Portions of one of his letters appeared in *Westways,* June, 1966, and we have combined other portions for the Los Angeles Corral's *Branding Iron* readers.

"On the first day of December 1, I left this city [San Francisco] for Southern California. I had intended to go by the ocean route, but, the weather being extremely foggy and at sea very uncomfortable, and the dangers of a voyage down the coast on a heavy sea in the old steamers which form the steamship line being very considerable, I determined to take my chances, inland, and undergo the discomforts of staging and the risks of being robbed by marauding wretches who, of late, swarm all over the southern portions of this State.

"The trip from San Francisco to Caliente, a distance of more than 300 miles was made over the Central and Southern Pacific Railroads. These lines lie over the great plains in the valley of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, and at present terminate at Caliente, at the base of what is known as the Tehachapi Pass.

"At Caliente, I took the stage for San Fernando, 100 miles distant. It was a regular old-fashioned Concord vehicle, intended to carry nine persons inside and four on top. Inside were, a battered stove-pipe-hatted man from Oregon, his wife, a boy about fifteen years old, who could not sit still, and a small child. These occupied the back seat. On the front seat sat an ancient Spanish lady, enormously fat, so much so that she was too rigid to adjust herself to the seat, and so kept slipping off all the time. Next to her sat a Mexican, and next to him a melancholy, cadaverous hungry-looking Swede, whose length of limb was simply fearful in a stage coach. On the center seat sat, on one side of the coach, Colonel A. B. Clark, from Georgia, connected with the Treasury Department at Washington; next to him some woman going to Los Angeles, looking up her husband; in her arms she had a child about three years old that wanted water all the time; and next and last, in front of the long-legged chap, sat the writer. Immediately behind me sat the Oregonian. His curiosity was very great, and his desire to enjoy the magnificent scenery irrepressible. His knees were in a state of constant motion, and being a rather tall specimen of man, they were by no means pleasant things to my back. His head was also in and out of the stage window like perpetual motion, and his remarks frequent and his admiration of everything unbounded.

"My long-legged Swede would open and shut himself like a long-bladed jack-knife, and for twenty miles he seemed to have resolved himself into a state of continued doubt as to whether he would shut himself up or open out full length, and thus he managed to keep himself in a state of continual motion.

"Mr. Clark, on his side, had the boy of the Oregonian bobbing up and down, leaning over and on him, wriggling and squirming until patience ceased, and Clark informed the rising hoodlum that he had engaged a seat on the stage, and that he must keep it, and not attempt to ride too much on his back. By this time Clark had squelched the boy, the ancient Spanish lady had gone fast asleep, and was gradually sliding out of her seat and depositing most of her weight on

. . . *Page Thirteen*

him. He finally became desperate, and, at the end of our second run, got out and relieved himself by pouring all the warmth of Caliente on both boy and the aged, fat and sleepy old *duenna.* In the meantime, I discovered that a small Chinaman had reached the end of his journey and vacated his place on the roof of the stage. Clark and I then mounted to the top of the stage, and had no further trouble with the mixed crowd inside.

"The ride over these Tehachapi Pass Mountains is one of singular and imposing grandeur. A mile off, across the immense cañon, the Chinamen could be seen pouring in and out of the railroad tunnels, they looked microscopic and the openings of the tunnels like squirrel holes.

"Occasionally, a puff of white smoke would be seen on the sides of the mountains, and then another, and another, followed by the cannon-like report of these powder-blasts, until fifty or perhaps a hundred of them were exploded, making quite a display of mimic war.

"Winding around gorges and cañons, every now and then we would cross the line of railway, and here would be found a little city of Chinamen's tents.

"These mountains are partially covered with live oak. Near the Tehachapi Pass summit, we reached a valley, some five miles long and perhaps a couple of miles wide, in the center of which is the village of Tehachapi, consisting of the stable of the Telegraph Line Stage Company, a board grocery, a sort of shanty hotel and a few other wooden houses without paint. Here, we got dinner—and such a dinner! Beef, that required the grinding power of a stamp mill to masticate; mutton stew that one might fairly take for Mexican *olla podrida;* butter, that was strong enough to overwhelm one with surprise the moment it was tasted; coffee, as weak and villainous as the butter was strong and disgusting; bread, looking as if it had come down with the dust of the middle ages upon it, and strong enough with saleratus to turn one's stomach. The execrable compound looked as if it had been struggling to put on the hues of the sun-beaten earth, and succeeded. Then, and finally, came a sort of purple-colored bean, called *bayo,* and the dessert, in the shape of a pie, which was the crowning outrage of that gorgeous failure—as a dinner.

The red-shirted wretch who sat the incomparable repast modestly taxed each of us fifty cents. My recollection is, that I was not hungry after I sat down, although I thought I was, as I had contributed seventy-five cents at Caliente for what I had concluded the meanest meal I had eaten in the State, but which was made respectable by the compounds of the Tehachapi swindle.

"A ride of about seven miles, brought us up to the summit of the Pass and a scene never to be forgotten. To the north and west, in all their solemn and awful grandeur, lay the Sierra Nevada and Coast Range Mountains, each one in itself a high mountain; and overall, the sun gleamed in beauty. The lights and shadows of that matchless spectacle will dwell in the halls of memory throughout life. Looking to the east, the eye swept the vast Mojave Desert, with its dismal, oppressive and perpetual sterility. To the south and directly in front of us, lay the San Bernardino range, dominated by Mount San Bernardino, which is 11,600 feet high, covered on its grand, broad summit with perpetual snow and ice. This range lies south, 75 miles from the pass, across the arm of the desert which pushes itself westward towards the ocean. To the southwest—and over which our road lay to Los Angeles—the San Francisco and San Fernando Mountains are interposed.

"As we descended from the mountain and reached the foothills, the wind began to make itself felt in constantly increasing force from the northwest. All around us bore evidence of the fury of these storms.

"The southern slopes of the mountains are smooth, hard sand, and the foot-hills denuded of all vegetation, except the dagger cactus and bunches of grease wood.

"The winds do not always blow, and they are variable in their violence. They sometimes are so strong as to stop the stages, fill the whole air with sand and pebbles, and even endanger human life.

"On the day we crossed the arm of this desert, the stage driver said the winds were not severe. The morning had been delightful.

The curtains of the stage were all up and the windows down; but when we struck these chilly blasts, the curtains were let down and windows put up. Shawls, overcoats, and blankets were brought into use. The wind blew so strong that we had to hold onto our hats with our hands, and even tie them on with handkerchiefs. At times it would seem as if we would not be able to maintain our position.

"About halfway across this God-forsaken place, is Willow Springs, where there is a stage stand and a supper place. The sun had not gone down. Chilled, covered up with sand, and out of humor, we descended and took our suppers. It was a human meal as compared with our dinner. We paid seventy-five cents, mounted to our seats and drove out into the desert.

"We reached the base of the San Francisco [San Franciscquito] Mountains about 9 o'clock at night. In these mountains is found Lake Elizabeth, whose gleaming waters we saw by starlight.

"At about 4 o'clock in the morning, five hours behind advertised time and twenty-one hours after entering the stage, we reached the little village of San Fernando, at the foot of the mountain of that name, twenty miles from Los Angeles. Here we took the [railroad] cars, and at 5:30 o'clock reached the 'City of the Angeles,' and, tired and cold and sleepy, went to bed."

After visiting many of the established communities in Southern California, Phillips chose to return to Los Angeles on the 16th of December, 1875, and

"At 3 o'clock a.m., on the 17th, took the cars for San Fernando, where, at 5 o'clock, we again entered the stage for Caliente. The air was cold and damp. This time we had but few passengers. At daylight we stopped in San Fernando cānon for breakfast, and of all the meals in California, for meanness, that was the champion. The mutton—they don't eat much else—was so tough that it ws beyond the powers of human grinders to masticate it. I gave it up. A woman, who had come through to San Bernardino from Arizona on a buck-board stage, with a boy about fifteen years old, said, "Well, this mutton was certainly taken from the original sheep, and a dog couldn't eat it." Mr. Clark, my friend, said, "Yes, and it was cut behind the horns." The ancient female who kept that place of entertainment for man and beast, got mad, and, to punish us for our ill-manners, she presently bristled in, and, with an emphasis that had a good sized oath in it, set down before the astonished gaze of each of us, two boiled eggs. We were not insulted, but grateful; ate the eggs and paid our "four bits," and were off. The day was warm, and we made our drive across the desert without winds, an unusual thing. The eighteen miles from Tehachapi village, down the mountains, were driven in the night-time, and at a rate of speed around sharp mountain spurs and over yawning chasms, that was enough, now and then, to make one's hair stand on end. But we reached Caliente on time, twenty-two hours after we had entered the stage. A night's sleep, and, on the morning of the 18th, San Francisco was reached."

The Blue Lady of the Plains

by Msgr. Francis J. Weber

There is an old and venerable tradition that the Christianization of California's native peoples pre-dated the arrival, in 1769, of Fray Junípero Serra and his Franciscan collaborators. It's a story that needs to be told because of its influence on mission history.

Fray Junípero Serra, practically all of his fellow friars, Viceroy Antonio Bucareli and even the King of Spain believed that missionary efforts along the Pacific Slope were prepared for and aided in a supernatural manner through the instrumentality of a woman!

Indeed, the story of Sor Maria de Jesús de

. . . *Page Fifteen*

Agreda (1602-1665) is one that affected missionary thinking and action from the Gulf of Mexico to the shores of the blue Pacific.

Maria was one of eleven children born to Francisco Coronel and Catalina de Arana. In 1619, she entered the convent of the Poor Clares at Agreda. A few years later she became abbess and held that position for the rest of her life.

Early on, Sor Maria de Jesús de Agreda was recognized for her sanctity. She wrote several books, one of which gained her the dubious distinction of being condemned by the Inquisition. (The decree was later revoked with publication of a better French translation.)

With Maria's permission and encouragement Fray Sebastian Marcillas, the youthful contemplative's confessor, wrote a letter to Archbishop Francisco Manso y Tuniga, of Mexico City, in which he revealed that she had been supernaturally transported to the southwest, there to announce Christianity to the natives.

Interestingly, the archbishop did not categorize the correspondence as just another crank letter. After consulting several prominent theologians and missionaries, including Fray Alonzo Benavides, the archbishop discovered that there were indeed many reports of isolated Indians in the area being pre-evangelized by a nun. The similarities were such as to cause the prelate to ask Benavides to personally interview Sor Maria de Jesús at her convent in Spain.

In his report to their subsequent meeting Benavides told how Sor Maria de Jesús declared that the Lord had told her that the natives of the New Mexico area were then disposed to accept Christianity. She explained being carried in ecstasy among the people in 1620, and how she had no problem communicating with them. There were some 500 visitations during which various tribes accepted her teachings.

Benavides related to the archbishop that her knowledge of the area was truly astounding. She responded to his questions accurately and with alacrity. "So many, many were the details she told me about the land," wrote Benavides, "that even I had not remembered all but she recalled them to my memory."

Fray Alonzo was convinced of the nun's veracity and conceived a high regard for her holiness. He felt that he was face-to-face with a supernatural phenomenon in which God had employed a nun in an extraordinary way to help the missionaries spread the Gospel.

There is evidence to indicate that California was also on Sor Maria's itinerary. Fray Junípero Serra himself acknowledged in his diary (between Loreto and San Diego) the nun's influence in the conversion of the natives. Serra had long been aware of Sor Maria de Jesús, probably even before his departure for the New World. Among his books was a copy of her *Mistica Ciudad de Dios*. The verbal traditions about the nun made a tremendous impression on all the friars. For them she was a precursor sent by God to prepare the Indians for their coming.

Others of the early friars expanded on the tradition. Fray Miguel Pieras recalled one ancient woman who told him how a missionary dressed like the friars made four "visits" to the Valley of the Oaks, taught the people Christian doctrines and then ascended into the sky.

The Indians at several other missions had similar stories. For example, at Santa Cruz, the missionaries stated that from their forefathers, the natives preserve the tradition that in some former times a famous foreign missionary woman came to these regions.

The story of this Spanish nun was a phenomenon of the southwest and west and its echoes were heard from Texas to California. Sor Maria de Jesús was a factor in the thinking and activity of the Franciscans throughout the American borderlands. In spoken and written accounts, the friars testified that their efforts were aided most remarkably by a Spanish nun who was transported into pagan lands to prepare Indians for the reception of the Gospel message.

To this day, there is no statement from Rome — and likely there never will be. Sor Maria de Jesús de Agreda was declared venerable and her books were approved by competent theologians, but she has never been beatified.

Page Sixteen . . .