LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS CORRAL

The Branding Iron

WINTER 2018 LOS ANGELES CORRAL NUMBER 289

Figure 1: *Dana and his crew arrive at Dana Point in May, 1835, with the brig* Pilgrim *anchored in the distance. Painting by and courtesy of Rick Blake.*

Richard Henry Dana at Dana Point

Eric Plunkett

Richard Henry Dana may hold the Orange County record for spending the least amount of time in a city named after him: 2.5 days and that's rounding *up*.[1] But this is for good reason. His writings describing what would later become Dana Point in his classic book, *Two Years Before the Mast*, tell of secluded beaches, a distant mission, throwing cattle hides off high cliffs, an oncoming storm and a dramatic escape. They encapsulate the mystery and romance of California's past; a time so different than our own that it exposes the very heart of our shared sentiments towards the feelings evoked by the land and its history. Not bad for a 19-year-old from a high-class family intending to improve his health by taking a year "off" from attending Harvard University and taking on the labor-intensive job of a sailor on a trading vessel.

Dana visited California between 1834-1836, when it was a territory of Mexico

(*Continued on Page 3*)

The Branding Iron

Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners

Published Quarterly

Winter - Spring – Summer – Fall

For subscription information: Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners, P. O. Box 1891, San Gabriel, CA 91778
www.lawesterners.org

The Branding Iron is always seeking articles of around 3,500 words dealing with every phase of the history of the Old West and California. Contributions from both members and friends are always welcome.

www.lawesterners.org

See our web site for all the Branding Irons, photos, Corral meetings and so much more!

Editor's Corner . . .

This Winter 2018 issue kicks off a new year of *Branding Irons* with a special, full-length article by first-time guest contributer Eric Plunkett. In "Richard Henry Dana at Dana Point," Plunkett investigates the true location of Dana's landing on the California coast, as immortalized in his memoir *Two Years Before the Mast*.

Miss any Corral meetings? Summaries of our monthy Roundup presentations for December through February are provided courtesy of younger members Aaron Tate, yours truly, and Dennis Bermudez. Rounding things off this issue are two Western book reveiws by Margaret Ellsberg and Living Legend Abe Hoffman.

As always, hats off to our fantastic Corral and guest contributors who make this journal something we can all enjoy and be proud of. If you would like to share your enthusiasm for Western history in *The Branding Iron*, please feel free to contact me with your ideas for articles, poetry, or artwork.

Happy Trails!

John Dillon
John.Dervin.Dillon@gmail.com

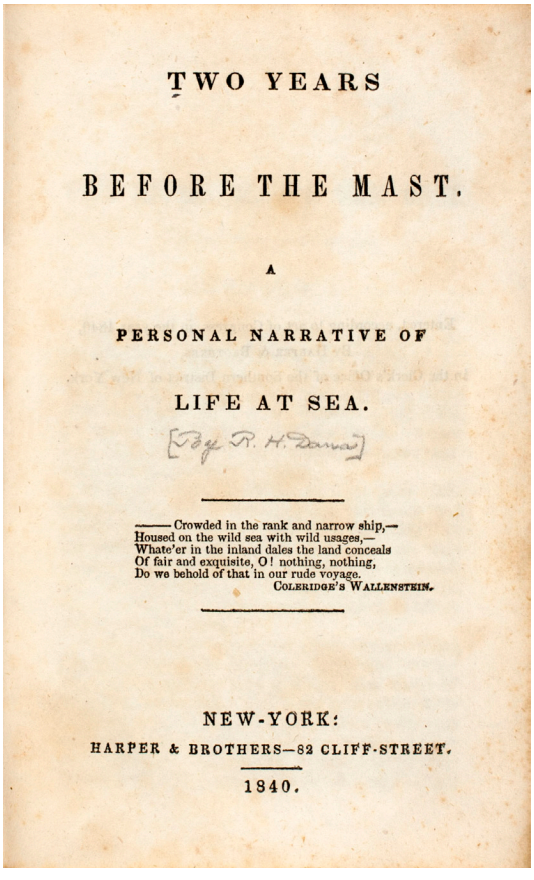
Figure 2: *Richard Henry Dana in 1842, 6 years after his return from the voyage that produced* Two Years Before the Mast. *Though it became a classic, Dana was only paid a flat fee of $750 and received 24 free copies. Public domain internet image.*

struggling to establish social and economic stability in the face of a declining mission system and an unstable government. In 1833 its territorial governor, José Figueroa, moved to secularize vast mission lands, making them available to prospective grantees to be developed into *ranchos*.[2] His intention was to facilitate economic development through the privatization of the cattle industry and its associated trade with foreign vessels visiting the coast.[3] At the same time on the other side of the continent, the Bryant, Sturgis & Company was formed in Boston to participate in the trade for hides from California.[4] Dana was a sailor with this company aboard the brig *Pilgrim* on his way to California and upon the ship *Alert* for his return trip to Boston, all the time under the direction of the oppressive Captain Francis A. Thompson. *Two Years Before the Mast* is his account of his two-year journey. Dana's purpose for writing the book was to help expose the negative working conditions of the common sailor. But upon its release in 1840, it became popular instead for capturing the wonder of readers who were enthralled with its sense of adventure and romantic descriptions of California.

During his journey, Dana made two visits to Dana Point in 1835. The first was sometime between May 5th and May 7th and the second on October 20-21.[5] The question is, where exactly did the events in *Two Years Before the Mast* take place at Dana Point? It is a question pondered by many who have gazed upon its cliffs and imagined a time long now past, just after the mission days, when what is now Orange County was defined by the rancho economy and the hide trade.

"San Juan Bay," as the anchorage at Dana Point was known, was not an ideal anchorage for ships to take on cargo.[6] The coast in its vicinity trends west-to-east, rather than the general north-to-south orientation of the Pacific coast, giving some protection from north and northwestern winds but exposing it in other directions, especially from the south and southeast. In the first U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey of California shores in the 1880s, the *Pacific Coast Pilot*, geographer George Davidson wrote that the "contracted and unprotected *anchorage* is in the bight one and a half miles to the eastward of Point San Juan Capistrano [Dana Point Headlands]."[7] This description corresponds to records of ships anchoring in San Juan Bay in the 1820s and 1830s, locating the anchorage just south and east of the mouth of San Juan Creek with San Juan Capistrano Mission in sight.[8] Just east of the mouth of this creek was *El Camino Real*, now roughly followed by the Pacific Coast Highway where it turns into Doheny Park Road. From the southeast, El Camino Real travelled up the coast along the beach at the base of the bluffs and then turned inland towards San Juan Capistrano at a point just east of the mouth of San Juan Creek. It served as the primary thoroughfare between San Juan Capistrano and the other California missions to the north and south.[9]

Considering this anchorage, the first question that comes to mind is why the hides were not simply embarked from the beach now occupied by Doheny State Beach, which was the landing from the earliest of the mis-



TWO YEARS

BEFORE THE MAST.

A

PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF

LIFE AT SEA.

[By R. H. Dana]

——— Crowded in the rank and narrow ship,—
Housed on the wild sea with wild usages,—
Whate'er in the inland dales the land conceals
Of fair and exquisite, O! nothing, nothing,
Do we behold of that in our rude voyage.
COLERIDGE'S WALLENSTEIN.

NEW-YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS—82 CLIFF-STREET.
1840.

Figure 3: *The title page from the 1st edition of* Two Years Before the Mast*, originally published in 1840. The book sold over 200,000 copies in its first decade.*

sion days, near the El Camino Real?[10] Since this was the most accessible beach by land in the region, why instead were the hides carted to the top of a high cliff and thrown down to a secluded beach as Dana described?

Presuming gravity works now as it did then, the task of getting heavy hides up the hill and to the edge of the cliffs would have certainly been avoided unless prompted by some necessity. Records of landings at San Juan Bay during the rancho period may indicate the reason this extra effort was necessary. Alexander Forbes, writing in 1835, described San Juan Bay as possessing a "difficult landing when the wind blows from the southeast, on account of the high surf."[11] Faxon Dean Atherton, visiting in 1837 described his anchored brig as "rolling tremendously" and on another visit in 1838 detailed in his journal that he landed "on shore through the worst surf I have ever seen, it breaking at least ½ mile from the shore."[12] Charles Wilkes, heading the United States Exploring Expedition from 1838-1842, reported that "The Bay [San Juan Bay] is entirely unprotected…the landing at times impossible on account of the surf."[13] Sir Edward Belcher, a British naval officer landing at San Juan on October 13, 1839, wrote that "Owing to the surf running at the time, and my objects rendering me, without any assistant, a perfect slave to duty, I was compelled to stick to a half-tide rock, to effect the security of this position…The anchorage is foul under five fathoms, is unprotected, and the landing bad."[14] Even the agent for the Bryant, Sturgis & Company, Alfred Robinson, with whom Dana travelled to Dana Point on both of his visits, wrote that the landing was "usually very dangerous" and that during one landing he and his companion(s) "needed all the skill of the helmsman to keep us from a drenched skin."[15] This rough surf made landings difficult and embarking cargo potentially dangerous, which may very well be the reason another landing was opened. Given the constraints of the geography, this landing was opened at the bottom of a cliff.[16]

The criteria for an alternate landing was pretty simple; calmer surf and a sand beach. Dana described the landing on his first visit, writing, "Just where we landed was a small cove, or bight, which gave us, at high tide, a few square feet of sand beach between the sea and the bottom of the hill."[17] He added that it was the "only landing-place."[18] He also described the vicinity of the landing as containing "great rocks" which were as "large as those of Nahant or Newport [beaches in his native Massachusetts with large rocks], but, to my eye, more grand and broken." Of his second visit, he described the landing as having a "long sand-beach." It is possible to use these statements to eliminate the landing's location anywhere along the coast from the mouth of San Juan Creek and east and southeast all the way to San Mateo Point. While the coast in this region contains cliffs and could have provided potential refuge from the rough surf and easy access to El Camino Real, it does not conform to Dana's description of the landing place because there

Figure 4: *A 1948 topographic map of Dana Point. One possible landing is just north of the "Dana" in "Dana Cove" and the other is just north of "Point" in "Princess Point." The mouth of San Juan Creek was historically located just above the "-ny Beach" in the "Doheny Beach State Park" map label, east of the bluffs. Courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey.*

is no "cove, or bight" anywhere along it. Furthermore, no "great rocks" exist east and southeast of San Juan Creek that would have reminded him of the large rocks at Nahant and Newport beaches in Massachusetts. He also omitted mention of El Camino Real or any such pathway that travelled along the base of the bluffs in this area. Since El Camino Real was the thoroughfare in this locale, it is rather unlikely he would have failed to mention it at all, especially considering he and his crew would have been working on top of it at the bottom of the bluffs.

The landing must therefore have been somewhere along the more dramatic cliffs and rocks west of the mouth of San Juan Creek. This area was altered significantly with the construction of the Dana Point marina in the 1960s, but a close study of early pictures and maps of the area suggest two possible coves and their associated long sand-beaches for the landing. One was located just north of Dana Cove and east of the Dana Point Headlands. The other was a beach east of the now bulldozed Princess Point (or Charlie's Point or San Juan Point as it was variously known) and against the wall just west of the mouth of San Juan Creek, on the north shore of what became known as Fisherman's Cove.[19]

Some historians speculate that the landing was the beach north of Fisherman's Cove, which is now bulldozed and part of a parking lot heading east and slightly south of the intersection of Dana Point Harbor Drive and Street of the Golden Lantern. This beach was consistent with Dana's description in some ways, but not in others. Besides being adjacent to the rough surf of the original landing at Doheny State Beach, Fisherman's Cove was strewn with small rounded boulders and shallow, having a low water line nearly all the way out to the southern end of Princess Point.[20] As the flood and ebb cycles for the tides were about 6 hours apart respectively, and since Dana and his crew spent the better part of the day on each of his two visits on shore, they had to deal with a low or ebbing tide at some point throughout the day.[21] Lunar phases for 1835 show that on both visits the tide was receding or low in the afternoon hours.[22] Since Fisherman's Cove was filled with small boulders just below the surface of the water at flooding and high tide, and would have required the crew to move boats filled with heavy hides across these boulders during an ebbing or low tide, landing there would have been challenging and inconvenient at best, and quite dangerous at worst.

Fisherman's Cove was also very near the mouth of San Juan Creek, which, from time-to-time, would create a sandspit that filled the entire cove with silt. This silt would be obliterated periodically by the runoff of San Juan Creek and/or rough seas resulting from heavy storms or winters. One such obliteration occurred in 1885, but there are records of the cove being filled with silt in 1884 and 1899.[23] A silted-up "cove" is a complete departure from Dana's descriptions of the landing place and would

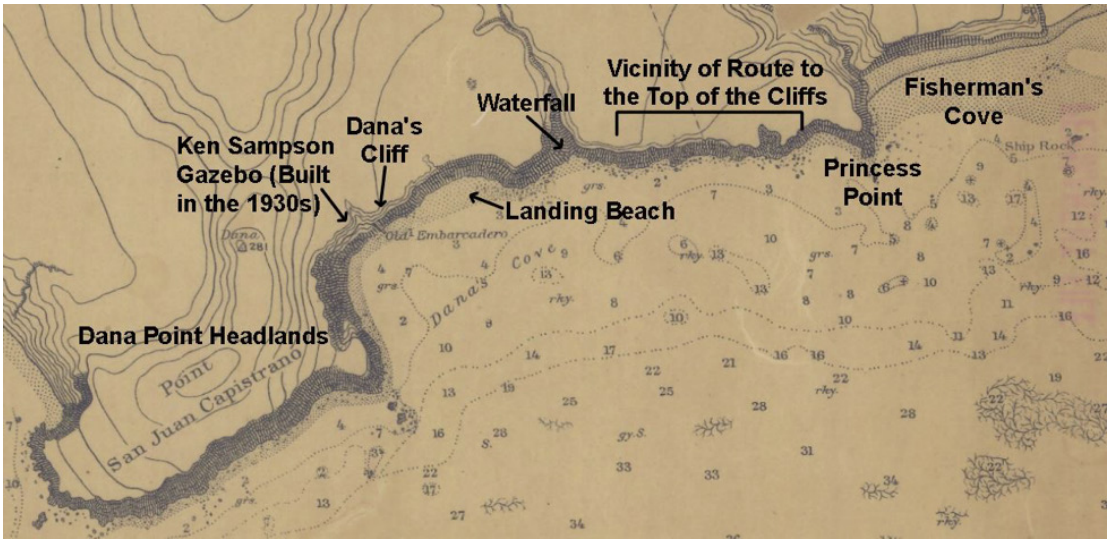


Figure 5: *This USCGS map from 1888 shows the "Old Embarcadero" at the base of what was probably "Dana's Cliff." Fisherman's Cove appears at the right, with the low water line almost out to Princess Point. The landing beach is an obvious larger area of sand beach where boats could be safely landed. Dana's route to the top of the cliff must have been in the vicinity east of the landing beach, or perhaps all the way around Princess Point. To view the "Pryor Adobe," which he called Mission San Juan Capistrano, he would have had to have been as far east as possible on his route up the cliffs. Washington: U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey.*

have made its beach useless for taking off hides, limiting his visits to a year when the sandspit was obliterated. If he happened to be at Dana Point when the sandspit was present, it may explain why he described the landing as "the only landing place" because Fisherman's Cove would not have been an option for landing, leaving only the beach in Dana Cove to land the boats. Regardless, the periodic existence of a sandspit calls the reliability of a landing in Fisherman's Cove into question and prompts one to wonder why the decision would be made to embark cargo there in the first place.

Another clue that the beach along Fisherman's Cove was not the landing site arises in Dana's description of rappelling down the side of the cliff on his second visit. At one point, he rappelled over a projection in the cliff to retrieve a few hides and wrote that "I could see nothing below me but the sea and the rocks upon which it broke, and a few gulls flying in mid-air." No such rocks existed below the cliffs of Fisherman's Cove, which stood above only a long sand beach. Though the cove was filled with small rounded boulders, these were only exposed at low tide and lay beyond the sand beach, not immediately below the cliffs as he implies. More generally, Fisherman's Cove had both fewer and smaller rocks in its vicinity compared to those located near Dana Cove. Since Dana makes multiple statements describing large rocks near the landing, this evidence again favors Dana Cove as the likely landing place.

Early writers and travelers attempting to locate Dana's landing also believed it to be the beach in Dana Cove.[24] Dana's son, Richard Henry, and his civil engineer cousin, investigated the area and believed Dana Cove to be the landing site.[25] George Gladden, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote an article in 1916 attempting to locate Dana's landing and came to the same conclusion.[26] So too did Walter Cline and J.N. Sokolich writing on the same question in the *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* in 1950 and 1959 respectively.[27] Adding to the legitimacy of their conclusions is that their fieldwork preceded the building of the marina, when Fisherman's Cove was still in existence. The marina's construction in the late 1960s altered the terrain so

Figure 6: *Dana may have described this very scene: "The country here for several miles is high table-land, running boldly to the shore, and breaking off in a steep cliff, at the foot of which the waters of the Pacific are constantly dashing. For several miles the water washes the very base of the hill, or breaks upon ledges and fragments of rocks which run out into the sea." At the upper center right of the photo is Princess Point, on the other side of which and to the left is the mouth of San Juan Valley. The beach at the lower left center of the photograph is the likely location of Dana's landing. Dana describes the land to the left as "table-land." Photo courtesy Orange County Archives.*

significantly that modern fieldwork on this question is inconclusive.

Perhaps most significantly, Dana Cove was favored as Dana's landing by geographer George Davidson. Davidson began working the coast of Orange County in 1850 and may have had personal acquaintance with the old timers in San Juan Capistrano concerning the exact location of the landing.[28] He wrote:

> Along the base of the western cliffs, half a mile within the extremity of Point San Juan Capistrano [Dana Point Headlands], there is a narrow breadth of sand beach, bare at ordinary low water; but at extreme low tides a line of shingle shows along the shore of this anchorage… Through this line of shingle the Mission padres opened a boat-landing under the cliffs, a little less than half a mile northeastward of the cape, where the shore is rather sharply indented, and drawing the hides to its edge tumbled them over to the beach, whence they were taken through the surf. This was the old embarcadero.[29]

This "Old Embarcadero" appears just west of the sand beach in Dana Cove on a USCGS sea chart in the vicinity of San Juan Capistrano in 1888.[30] Early photographs of this site show that it was quite rocky, making it an improbable boat landing but a strong candidate for the location of the cliff from which Dana threw down the hides. While writing about transporting the hides from the bottom of the cliff, Dana wrote that the men "were walking to and fro on the beach, carrying the hides, as they picked them up, to the distant boats, upon the tops of their heads," implying that the boat landing was some distance away from the cliff. The sand beach in Dana Cove was about 125 walking-yards east of the "Old Embarcadero," which agrees with Dana's description of the "distant boats." This beach is the most sensible location of the boat landing given the available evidence.

With this landing beach in mind, it is possible to reconstruct Dana's travels throughout Dana Point. On his first visit, Dana described the topographical features in the vicinity of the beach; "The country here for several miles is high table-land, running boldly to the shore, and breaking off in a steep cliff,

at the foot of which the waters of the Pacific are constantly dashing. For several miles the water washes the very base of the hill, or breaks upon ledges and fragments of rocks which run out into the sea." The "table-land" he refers to is the relatively flat region immediately north of the cliffs along the beach. His description of the water breaking upon ledges and fragments of rocks which run out into sea conforms perfectly with the shore between Princess Point and Dana Cove.

After landing on the beach, Dana wrote that "Directly before us rose the perpendicular height of four of five hundred feet." Considering the hill/cliff (Dana himself used the two words interchangeably) is really only about 175-200 feet above the beach, much has been made of this inconsistency by subsequent writers. It need not be. As Dana was writing about 3 years after he made his visits, and as he did not expect such a large audience to read his book, he either exaggerated the cliff's height or simply overestimated it.[31] There is evidence for the latter, however, given that he described the "hill" as twice the height of the tallest mast on his vessel on each of his two visits. Estimates vary, but the masts on the *Pilgrim* and the *Alert* were about 100 feet tall, making this observation a fair estimate of the true height of the cliff.[32]

After landing, Dana and his crew took "different directions up and down the beach, to explore it." This was a rare opportunity because the harsh and controlling Captain Thompson gave the crew little time for leisure or exploration. In this case, the captain may have stayed aboard the *Pilgrim* or went with the agent, Alfred Robinson, who took the "circuitous way round the hill to the mission, which was hidden behind it," giving the crew "an hour or more" to explore. The relative freedom Dana felt at this time amplified the grandeur and seclusion of the geography to prompt his oft-quoted line; "San Juan is the only romantic spot on the coast."[33]

Dana explored the beach with his crewmates, "picking up shells, and following the sea where it tumbled in, roaring and spouting, among the crevices of the great rocks." As they explored, Dana observed "the great steep hill rising like a wall, and cutting us off from all the world, but the 'world of waters!' " Historic photos taken in the vicinity of the beach show a landscape that could certainly inspire such a statement, as the "steep hill" and cliffs stretched both east and west from the landing beach. At some point in their explorations, Dana wrote, "[I] separated myself from the rest, and sat down on a rock, just where the sea ran in and formed a fine spouting horn." This rock was probably located towards the inner part of the cove where the shore makes a right angle from west-east to north-south, or somewhere along the rocky beach below the headlands towards the San Juan Rocks.[34] From this location he could have watched the famous "Killer Dana" waves, which travelled along the eastern portion of the Dana Point Headlands and may help explain the spouting horn and his description of sitting on a rock "where the sea ran in."[35] He would have also had a fine view to the east as the ocean "breaks upon ledges and fragments of rocks which run out into the sea," shaping his later description of this terrain while writing the book.

After almost an hour, Dana was awakened from his romantic meditations by the "distant shouts of my companions and saw that they were collecting together, as the agent had made his appearance, on his way back to our boat." This is further evidence that his resting rock was somewhere closer to the point of the headlands, as the circuitous route upon which the agent was returning was almost certainly to the east of the landing beach, "round the hill," because there was no obvious way up to the top of the cliffs to the west of it. The agent, Alfred Robinson, would have had to come back around one of the "hills," or ridges going out to the sea. These ridges terminated in the large rocks on the shore, which would have forced Robinson to climb above them. He would have thus made his appearance by sight before arriving back at the landing beach. Dana would have been looking south to the sea, when the shouts of his companions directed his attention eastward (his left) towards the beach.

Upon Robinson's arrival, the crew returned back to the *Pilgrim*, ate dinner (that is, lunch, which was usually at noon) and then

returned back to shore in the "quarter-boat, with the long-boat in tow" which was "nearly laden with goods."[36] Dana wrote, as "we drew in, we descried an ox-cart and a couple of men standing directly on the brow of the hill; and having landed, the captain took his way round the hill, ordering me and another to follow him." As mentioned previously, this route to the top of the cliffs likely went eastward from the landing beach, around a couple or more of the "hills" or ridges which terminated in rocks at the shore. The terrain in this direction is consistent with his initial description of the agent's route up the cliff, writing that he had to "take a long circuit, and yet frequently had to jump over breaks, and climb steep places in the ascent."

At some point, they had to climb all the way up one of these ridges to the top of the cliff. It is difficult to determine exactly where they climbed up, but it could have been one of the two small ridges that terminated into the ocean just west of Princess Point, or even all the way around Princess Point itself.[37] The route up must have been very steep and trail-less. Dana quipped that "No animal but a man or a monkey could get up it."[38] He offered more details when he described his first climb up, writing "We followed [the captain], picking our way out, and jumping and scrambling up, walking over briers and pickly [sic] pears, until we came on top." Above the very steep route to the top of the cliffs was a gradually ascending landscape, which is now graded and developed, where he and his companions had to walk in order to get around a small canyon back to the cliffs above the beach.[39] These changes in terrain explain his shift from "jumping and scrambling up" to "walking over briers and pickly pears." The natural landscape, even where it exists today, is covered with chaparral and prickly (Dana called them "pickly") pears.

From somewhere in his ascent, Dana could view his general surroundings. After reaching the top of it, Dana wrote that "Here the country stretched out for miles, as far as the eye could reach, on a level, table surface, and the only habitation in sight was the small white mission of San Juan Capistrano, with a few Indian huts about it, standing in a small hollow, about a mile from where we were." This statement may be the greatest cause of confusion among those attempting to pin down Dana's whereabouts in Dana Point. It is not his description of a "level, table surface" that is confusing, as early photographs generally show the region as relatively flat compared to the cliffs. Rather, what cannot be reconciled is the fact that Mission San Juan Capistrano was over 3 miles away on a straight line from where he was and almost certainly not visible from anywhere along the cliffs from the Dana Point Headlands all the way east to the mouth of San Juan Creek.[40]

So what exactly did Dana see? There are a couple important clues here. First, he described seeing the Mission as "standing in a small hollow." This is a curious statement considering the actual "small hollow" where the Mission is located is in the valley of San Juan Creek, which is the major drainage in the area. Furthermore, his portrayal of the Mission as "small" and surrounded by "a few Indian huts" in no way described San Juan Capistrano at the time, which was composed of adobe buildings in the Mission proper, the ruins of the Great Stone Church and numerous adobes in the small town surrounding it. The agent for Dana's ship, Alfred Robinson, made specific mention of these adobes while travelling in San Juan Capistrano in 1829, writing that "In many of the villages the residences consist of straw huts of an oval form, which, when decayed, the Indians set on fire and erect new ones—here [referring to San Juan Capistrano], however, they are built of unburnt brick, tiled and whitewashed, forming five or six blocks, or streets, which present a neat and comfortable appearance."[41] Among all of the adobe structures in the complex, and Robinson's specific mention that Mission San Juan Capistrano possessed adobes instead of Indian huts, it makes little or no sense that Dana pointed out "a few Indian huts" in his description.

The solution to this riddle is that Dana never saw the Mission from above the cliffs at all; he must have seen the Pryor Adobe, which still stands at the base of a small hill above the eastern bank of San Juan Creek. This little adobe is located less than a mile from shore

Figure 7: *The most likely landing place of Dana's boats is between the large rock and the black rocks at the base of the ridge descending into the water. This photo was taken from the most likely spot from which Dana's hides were thrown down to the beach. Photo courtesy Orange County Archives.*

and likely dates from the building of the Mission.[42] Considering Dana would have, at best, laid eyes on San Juan Capistrano from the ocean, he would have only known its general direction from above the cliffs.[43] Seeing the Pryor Adobe as the "only habitation in sight," perhaps he mistook it for the Mission itself. From above the cliffs just west of Princess Point, the San Juan Valley would have *just* been visible above a low ridge of hills, making the Pryor Adobe look as though it was "standing in a small hollow." From the rise above the cliffs just west of Princess Point, the Pryor Adobe stood about 1.4 miles away, or as Dana refers to it, "about a mile" away. It also had at least one storage shed, one of which appears on early maps, and may have been mistaken for an Indian hut. Perhaps, too, there were Indian huts at the time for the workers (who were typically Indian) located in its immediate vicinity.[44] It may have made sense to have the hides stored in such a place, rather than the Mission, in order to aid in their accessibility to trading ships. The Pryor Adobe could also have been the agent, Alfred Robinson's, destination when ordering down the hides. His route from the landing beach to the Pryor Adobe would have been about 2.5 miles one way.[45] In order for the 28-29 year old Robinson to complete the journey in "an hour or more," as Dana described, he would have had to acquire a horse at the top of the cliff or at the Pryor Adobe.[46]

The distance from the view of the Pryor Adobe at the top of the cliff and west to the cliff's edge was a little less than a half mile on foot, as implied when Dana wrote, "Reaching the brow of the hill, where the cart stood, we found several piles of hides, and Indians sitting round them." The entire route from the beach to the top of the cliff was a mile or less, giving Dana and his crew plenty of time throughout the day to make the journey, even twice as they do on their second visit when Dana descends the cliff by rope. He probably described the route as "circuitous" because it went about a half a mile east along the cliffs, north up to the top, and then re-

turns back west to the "brow of the hill" at the top of the cliff.

From the top of the cliff, Dana wrote that "One or two other carts were coming slowly on from the mission, and the captain told us to begin and throw the hides down." From the brow of the hill, Dana would have had a view of the path of the carts, which probably travelled in the vicinity of today's Del Obispo Street, to about the location of Pacific Coast Highway and finally somewhere along Del Prado and then over to the cliffs.[47]

So which cliff were the hides actually thrown from? Some relevant points can be inferred from the objective of the operation and the topography. There were no real obstacles to getting carts full of hides anywhere above the beach, making any cliff along it a possibility. The cliff would be near the cove in order for the hides to be conveniently loaded onto the boats. It would also be sensible to choose a rather vertical face from which to throw the hides in order to maximize the probability that they would land on the beach instead of getting stuck on a steep slope.[48]

Of his first visit, Dana wrote of "Standing on the edge of the hill, and looking down the perpendicular height" and how the sailors appeared "like mice" or "mites, on the beach." He continued, "Down this height, we pitched the hides, throwing them as far out into the air as we could; and as they were all large, stiff, and doubled, like the cover of a book, the wind took them, and they swayed and eddied about, plunging and rising in the air, like a kite when it has broken its string." He also observes that "As it was now low tide, there was no danger of their falling into the water."[49] Of his second visit he again wrote of "throwing off the hides, and watching them pitching and scaling to the bottom, while the men, dwarfed by the distance, were walking to and fro on the beach, carrying the hides, as they picked them up, to the distant boats, upon the tops of their heads." He repeats the description that the escarpment beneath the brow of the hill was "exactly perpendicular."

If the topography was then as it is now and in photos from the early-to-mid 20th century, the cliffs west of the landing beach are more perpendicular while the cliffs towards the middle of the landing beach and eastward are, for the most part, very steep but not vertical. George Davidson must have agreed in the 1880s when he located the "Old Embarcadero," which probably referred to the cliff where the hides were thrown down, beneath the cliffs west of the landing beach. In modern terms, this puts Dana's cliff west of the former beach, southwest from the intersection of Street of the Ruby Lantern and Santa Clara Avenue from the top of the cliff, and north from about the middle of Dana Cove Park from below. The middle and eastern portions of the former landing beach are southeast of the intersection of Ruby Lantern and Santa Clara Avenue from above, and north of the split between the west and eastbound lanes of Dana Point Harbor Drive, east of the parking lot to access Baby Beach.

Thrown from these cliffs, the hides' trajectory would have been towards the south or southeast, towards the beach. Throwing them in this direction could explain Dana's writing of "throwing them [the hides] as far out into the air as we could," and that "the wind took them" because he may have been throwing them against the winds coming from the south or southeast. Winds from these directions, as noted earlier in this article, were the cause of the rough surf that may have driven Dana and his crew to Dana Cove in the first place. He also described the sailors carrying the hides to the "distant boats." A close look at photos shows rocks stretching from the middle of the beach towards the west. These rocks may have forced the boats to land on the eastern side of the landing beach under the steep, but not vertical, hill. From these western cliffs, it would make sense for Dana to describe the boats as "distant" as they would have been on the opposite, or eastern side, of the beach.

On Dana's second visit, some of the hides that were thrown down became stuck in the recesses of the cliff. He wrote that "Two or three boat-loads [of hides] were sent off, until at last all were thrown down, and the boats nearly loaded again, when we were delayed by a dozen or twenty hides which had lodged in the recesses of the bank, and which we could not reach by any missiles, as the

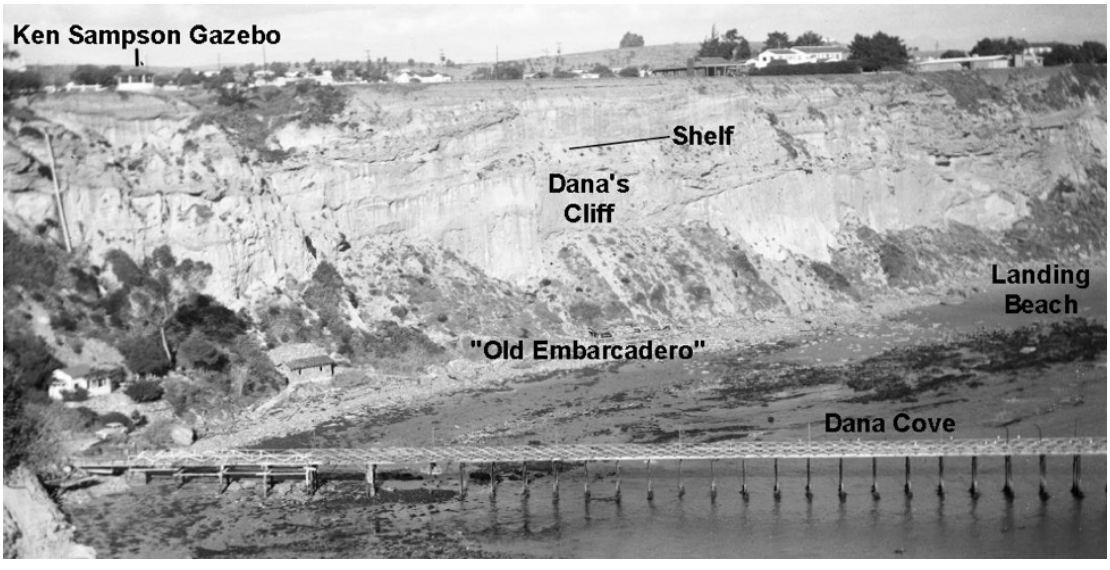


Figure 8: *This photo of Dana Cove from the 1940s at low tide shows the "Old Embarcadero" site that appears on the USCGS sea chart from the 1880s. The tallest perpendicular cliff in the Dana Point area rises above it. The cliff where the hides were thrown down to the beach is likely either just above or to the left of the "Dana's Cliff" label. An obvious shelf extends above it, which could be where the hides became stuck on Dana's second visit. Just to the left is a rounded protrusion that could have also been where the hides were thrown down, especially given what appears to be less sediment at this cliff's base, making it easier to get the hides all the way down to the beach. The cliffs towards the left and right sides of the photo have a shallow slope to the cliff's edge, making them less likely candidates for the location where the hides were thrown down. Photo courtesy Orange County Archives.*

general line of the side was exactly perpendicular, and these places were caved in, and could not be seen or reached from the top." After going back down to the beach and conversing with the crew and the captain, Dana volunteered for the dangerous job of dislodging the hides by descended the cliff by a pair of topgallant, studding-sail halyards, which are ropes used in the operations of a sailing ship. He and another companion traveled back up to the top of the cliff where he wrote that "We found a stake fastened strongly into the ground, and apparently capable of holding my weight, to which we made one end of the halyards well fast, and taking the coil, threw it over the brink." The stake indicates that this was probably not the first time a crew had to deal with hides becoming stuck in the recesses of the cliff. It was likely put into place by another vessel's crew or by the workers from San Juan Capistrano.[50]

After throwing the rope down the cliff, Dana wrote that "The end [of the rope], we saw, just reached to a landing-place, from which the descent to the beach was easy." This describes the topography of the cliff above the "Old Embarcadero" rather convincingly, for at its base is a navigable hill of eroded sediment rising up about 40 feet or so to where the cliff turns vertical. If the bottom of the rope was not visible from where it was thrown down, Dana and his companion(s) could easily get a view of it by walking along the cliff's edge.

Dana then described his descent:

> "Having nothing on but shirt, trousers, and hat, the common sea rig of warm weather, I had no stripping to do, and began my descent by taking hold of the rope in each hand, and slipping down, sometimes with hands and feet round the rope, and sometimes breasting off with one hand and foot against the precipice, and holding on to the rope with the other. In this way I descended until I came to a place which shelved in, and in which the hides were lodged. Keeping hold of the rope with one hand, I scrambled in [to where the cliff shelved

in], and by aid of my feet and the other hand succeeded in dislodging all the hides, and continued on my way."

Given that he could only kick down the hides or throw them with one hand, he could not have ejected them very far from the cliff's edge, which was sufficient because the cliff below the portion that shelved in was vertical all the way down to the slope at the bottom of the rope where "the descent to the beach was easy."

He continued his way down writing that "Just below this place [where he dislodged the hides] the precipice projected again, and, going over the projection, I could see nothing below me but the sea and the rocks upon which it broke, and a few gulls flying in mid-air." The rocks he referred to could be those visible at the base of the cliffs west of the landing beach in early photographs. The reference to "gulls flying in mid-air" could have been an exaggeration unless they were flying rather low, though it is unclear whether he implied that the gulls were flying directly below him or were simply visible. Regardless, he finally acknowledged his nerves, writing "I had always a strong head upon which height and motion had no effect, yet I could not but feel that if there was a weak part to the rope or the stake should loosen or break–'sic afa' as I should hae!' "[51] Such concern at this point was warranted, given he was likely hanging on to the rope descending the vertical portion of the cliff just above the relatively shallow slope which runs down to the beach. This description matches the cliffs as they are today, with a vertical portion below the places that shelve in and above the shallower slope of accumulated earth from erosion at its base, down which "the descent to the beach was easy." Finally, he wrote that "I got down in safety, pretty well covered with dirt; and for my pains was told, 'What a d----d fool you were to risk your life for a half a dozen hides!' " Given the sandstone sedimentary makeup of the cliff, as well as the 40 or so feet of steep hill he had to descend to get to the beach, there were plenty of opportunities to get covered in dirt.

Even though Dana's description conforms in many ways with the cliffs today, the image he invokes of hanging perilously from an entirely vertical cliff, save one portion that shelved in, does not equate with the cliffs in the vicinity of the landing beach, nor any other cliffs along the coast from the Dana Point Headlands to the mouth of San Juan Creek.[52] The cliff either changed since then or Dana's description of it lacks sufficient detail to positively identify the exact place where he descended it.

The first step to resolving this conflict is to ask the question of *how* the hides got stuck if they were thrown "as far out into the air" as Dana and his companion(s) could throw them and the cliff was vertical with only one portion that shelved in. Even with a strong south or southeast wind and the stiff hides sometimes taking vertical dives when they caught the air, how did "half a dozen" hides end up coming back far enough to get stuck in the portion that shelved in?[53] Confounding this improbability is that the shelved in portion must not have "shelve[ed] in" very far. Of his first visit, Dana wrote that "Some of the hides lodged in cavities under the bank and out of our sight, being directly under us; but by pitching other hides in the same direction, we succeeded in dislodging them."[54] Throwing another hide in the same direction as one that became stuck implies that there must have been a rather shallow portion that shelved in, otherwise there would have been a low probability of this method working. Dana himself also referred obliquely to the cliff's irregular, rather than vertical, portions. When he first realized the hides were stuck, he wrote "we were delayed by a dozen or twenty hides which had lodged in the recesses of the bank, and which we could not reach by any missiles, as the general line of the side was exactly perpendicular, and these places were caved in, and could not be seen or reached from the top." His remark that the "general line of the side [meaning the average slope] was exactly perpendicular" and that there were "places [plural] that were caved in" indicate that the cliff was not necessarily entirely perpendicular.

It is more likely that the cliff had a shelf, which may have indeed "shelved in," but also protruded enough that the hides got stuck when they were thrown down. Such protrusions and their associated partially "shelved in" portions are common on the cliffs in the vicinity west of the landing beach. The cliffs above the site marked as the "Old Embarcadero" on the maps from the 1880s have a very obvious shelf with vertical faces above and below it, aligning with Dana's description of his descent. In particular, there is a rounded protrusion at the western end of this portion of cliffs with a lower volume of sediment at its base compared to the cliffs in its immediate vicinity, perhaps making it the best candidate from which to throw hides all the way down to the beach.[55] The top of this cliff appears to have a clear line of sight to the landing beach, a shelf on the cliff face with a portion that shelves in and a former rocky shore at its base. This cliff, more than any other, conforms to Dana's descriptions and the evidence.

Still, this and the other cliffs in the vicinity of the "Old Embarcadero" do not match Dana's description entirely. The shelf does not shelve in as far as Dana's description implies, but rather generally protrudes from it. In light of the difficulties in matching this, or any other cliff, to Dana's description with total satisfaction, perhaps it is best to interpret any exaggerated or inconsistent details in his account of descending the cliff in the context of the danger of his situation, which probably focused his attention more on getting down safely than committing his observations accurately to memory. There is also, of course, the tendency for stories such as these to become more dramatic with each retelling, perhaps influencing him to add a little height and verticality to the cliff in his book.

Now for the final question related to Dana's whereabouts in Dana Point; the anchorage of the *Pilgrim* during his early May visit and the *Alert* on his October 20-21st visit. The optimum time to anchor in San Juan Bay was in late spring through early fall in order to avoid storms coming up from the southeast which could smash the vessels against the shore.[56] In his early May visit, Dana wrote that the "shore is rocky, and directly exposed to the south-east, so that vessels are obliged to slip and run for their lives on the first sign of a gale; and late as it was in the season, we got up our slip-rope gear, as though we meant to stay only twenty-four hours."[57] The slip-rope gear was similarly prepared on his October 20-21 visit, indicating that Captain Thompson was quite concerned about the possibility of such a storm. The typical anchorage, just south and east of the mouth of San Juan Creek, was too far to the east of Dana Point Headlands and too close to shore, being at a typical anchoring depth of about 10 fathoms or less, to be safe in a storm from the southeast.[58] Captain Thompson thus anchored further away from land and further west in order to increase the probability the ship would make it around the Dana Point Headlands in such a storm.

Of his first visit, Dana wrote that the *Pilgrim* anchored "in twenty fathoms' water, almost out at sea" and of his second visit wrote that the *Alert* anchored "nearly three miles from the shore." Three miles from shore would have been completely out to sea, where the sea floor drops precipitously beyond 20 fathoms. He may have exaggerated the distance because it was rare for Captain Thompson to anchor so far away from shore. Another possibility is that "three miles from the shore" meant 3 miles from the landing, but to the southeast, not perpendicular from the shore. Using modern sounding charts, a 3 mile distance roughly southeast from the landing to 20 fathoms' depth aligns immediately south of the mouth of San Juan Creek. The anchorage may have been in this area, which is about 3 miles from the landing but only about 2.3 miles from the mouth of San Juan Creek.[59] From this anchorage, San Juan Capistrano would not have been visible and Dana omits any mention of being able to see it, while records from other ships of the period that anchored closer to the mouth of San Juan Creek, did.[60] Perhaps this lends a little legitimacy to this more distant anchorage being Dana's, albeit through the limited reliability of evidence through omission. With this anchorage in mind, another point of consideration is that

Dana would have been able to see San Juan Capistrano aligned with the Pryor Adobe if he looked northeast through San Juan Valley while on his way to the landing beach. This could very well have been the reason why he mistook the Pryor Adobe for San Juan Capistrano in the first place.

If the identity of the cliff described earlier in this article is correct, this anchoring point fits Dana's description of the ship as seen from it. While throwing the hides down to the beach on his first visit, Dana seemed to equate the view of the men on the beach with being able to see the *Pilgrim* in the distance. On his first visit he described himself as "Standing on the edge of the hill, and looking down the perpendicular height" and that the sailors appeared "like mice" or "mites, on the beach," but also mentioned, presumably in the same view, the *Pilgrim* looking diminished and like a buoy, "Almost too small for sight." As he would have been looking south or southeast over the beach, he would have seen the *Pilgrim* somewhere in one of these directions, "almost out at sea," in accordance with his description of "our tall anchoring bark, Diminished to her cock; her cock a buoy, Almost too small for sight."

After descending the cliffs on his second visit, Dana and his crew faced an oncoming storm from the southeast. Dana wrote that "While we were carrying the hides to the boat I perceived, what I had been too busy to observe before, that heavy black clouds were rolling up from the seaward, a strong swell heaving in, and every sign of a southeaster." Captain Thompson "hurried everything" and with great difficulty, "and by wading nearly up to our armpits, we got the boats through the surf, and began pulling aboard." But the "ship was lying three miles off, pitching at her anchor, and the farther we pulled, the heavier grew the swell. Our boat stood nearly up and down several times." In a very rough sea, they pulled themselves and the hides aboard. After the anchor was raised, the ship was before the wind to the north or northwest and "standing off from the lee shore and rocks against a heavy head sea." These rocks were almost certainly the San Juan Rocks off the Dana Point Headlands, which posed a threat as the crew attempted to get the ship around the point. After considerable effort, they made it around the point and were on their way to San Pedro. So ended Dana's time in Dana Point.

It must be said that all of the conclusions of this article are subject to change with new data or research. Given the radical changes to the area since 1835, it may be impossible to determine where any of the events in *Two Years Before the Mast* took place in Dana Point with exact certainty. But if the arguments in this article *are* correct, the cliffs Dana threw the hides from *still exist!* The very spot where Dana threw the hides off the cliff, in true Orange County fashion, is likely in someone's backyard at the top of the Dana Point cliffs, just south of Santa Clara Avenue between Street of the Blue Lantern and Street of the Ruby Lantern. The late, great, Orange County historian Jim Sleeper once had an idea for a book called *Historic Parking Lots of Orange County*. If this book ever comes into being, this author would like to propose a sequel: *Historic Backyards of Orange County*.

Notes

1. Saints don't count.
2. Most grantees were former members of the military and their sons.
3. Despite attempts to give Indians land and citizenship, Figueroa's efforts generally resulted in the same exploitation of Indian labor that occurred under the mission system.
4. A hide is the outer skin and hair of a cow. After being folded in half and tanned with the hair side out, they were so stiff and heavy that they had to be carried on the sailor's heads one at a time. The hides would be used to make leather goods back in Boston.
5. Dana traveled on the brig *Pilgrim* to San Diego after his first visit to Dana Point, arriving on May 8th 1835. This puts him at San Juan Bay sometime between May 6th and May 7th because it typically took only a

day or two to get from San Juan Bay to San Diego. Of his second visit, he wrote that his ship *Alert* arrived at San Juan Bay on Oct 20th and the hides were collected on Oct 21st. The hides embarked at Dana Point were brought from the former San Juan Capistrano ranch lands, the Yorba family ranches in Orange County (*Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana*, originally a Spanish land concession in 1810 and *Rancho Cañon de Santa Ana*, a Mexican land grant in 1834) and up the coast from the *Las Flores Estancia* of Mission San Luis Rey in northern San Diego County. Eugene Duflot de Mofras, a French explorer and diplomat, travelled through California in 1841 and wrote that *Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana* "ships its products from the anchorage at San Juan." Mofras (2004): 210. Rev. Fr. Antonio Peyri, the missionary of Mission San Luis Rey, petitioned in Dec 1829 to "be permitted to embark 1,500 cattle hides, the majority of which are at the Rancho of Las Flores, on the English frigate *Thomas Nowlan* at the anchorage of San Juan Capistrano." Engelhardt (1921): 49-50.

6. Or as the American's called it, St. John's Bay. Though the first European exploration of San Juan Bay may have been conducted by the Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo expedition in 1542, or thereafter by Spanish Manila galleon crews returning to New Spain (modern day Mexico; for example, see Sebastião Rodrigues Soromenho, 1595), the first documented exploration of the bay was conducted by the Sebastian Vizcaino expedition in 1602. After leaving San Diego on November 20th 1602, one of the Vizcaino expedition's members, Father Antonio de la Ascensión, wrote that they headed north "with great labor, until they [Ascensión used third-person point of view in his account] came in sight of an *Ensenada*. The country surrounding this was very verdant, and the Indians made many smokes and fires, apparently signals for the ships to enter. On coming to look it over, no place was found where the ships could anchor and be safe from the northwest wind, and so they passed on." Henry R. Wagner, the premier 20th century historian of early Spanish expeditions to the California coast, identified this "*Ensenada*" as "San Juan Bay." If so, Ascensión produced the first known record describing the limitations of San Juan Bay as an anchorage. The Vizcaino expedition also produced maps that gave Dana Point its first name, calling it "Punta de Arboleda" or roughly, "Wooded Point." This likely referred to the trees that grew along the mouth of San Juan Creek. Vizcaino's expedition was primarily searching for bays where Manila galleons could safely anchor on their way back to New Spain. Wagner (1966): 234-235.
7. Davidson (1889): 33.
8. Atherton (1964): 49-50, 91. Faxon Dean Atherton, landing on May 29th, 1837, wrote that the "Mision [sic] [is] open from the point inside where the river empties." On another landing on March 1st, 1838, Atherton describes the anchorage as coming "to anchor 8½ fathoms water, the Mision [sic] wholly open and point bearing N. by W. ½ W. Saw a number of troops on the beach." Another visitor, Captain William Cunningham in October of 1827, wrote an entry in his logbook that described coming to anchorage "in 8½ fath's. [fathoms] Black muddy sand and very good holding ground. Pt. de Recodo N.W. ½W. Rock above water W.N.W. Mission in sight N.N.E. Catalina S.W. by W. to W.S.W. ½W. or W. by S. Remained at this place till the 9th in which time we embarked about 1400 hides some tallow and a few horns. Winds generally from N.W. and pleasant weather." Cunningham (1958): 37-38.
9. Vischer (n.d.); Robinson (1897).
10. Francisco Palóu, a Spanish missionary in California in the late 18th century, wrote a biography of Junípero Serra in which he described San Juan Bay as "a good anchorage even for frigates, and defended from the weather during that part of the season when the vessels visit this coast, as the south winds which blow at that time are not very strong, and the harbor is open in that direction. From the north and west the vessels are well protected by a high point of land which juts out quite a way into the sea, forming a bay, which the Naval Officers called San Juan Capistrano, and in which there is a good-sized inlet, into which the stream of fresh water which runs down by the side of the Mission empties. It is near this inlet that the

vessels unload their cargoes for this Mission and for that of San Gabriel, saving themselves the labor of going to the port of San Diego in order to transport their cargoes by mule-train." This clearly indicates that the original landing was near the mouth of San Juan Creek. Palóu (1913): 192.

11. Forbes (1839): 168-169. Visitors during the mission era also commented on the difficult landing. Archibald Menzies, a naturalist with the British George Vancouver expedition, visited California in 1793 and wrote that "[we] passd a Mission situated in a delightfull Valley surrounding a small Bay which was interspersd/with clumps of trees & a vast number of Cattle & Horses, this we were afterwards informd is namd the Mission of St Juan; the Bay before it is much exposd & surrounded by a stoney beach & though we passd within two miles of it we saw nobody attempt to come off either in Boat or Canoe." Menzies & Eastwood (1924): 330.
12. Atherton (1964): 49-50.
13. Wilkes (1849): 38.
14. British, United States, Spanish and French Governments (1853): 84. The rest of Sir Edward Belcher's entry reads "The bay, or rather the outer rock, on which I observed, is situated in lat. 33° 26′ 56″ N. and long. 117° 40′ 50′′ W. It has a high cliffy head to the northwest, but terminates in low sandy beaches to the southward [he means "eastward"]. This bay was examined and surveyed."
15. Robinson (1897): 156.
16. Alfred Robinson did not directly connect the rough surf to the need for an alternate landing, but did write that there were "two points for embarking cargo; one is where the hides are taken directly to the beach, and the other, where they are thrown down upon it from a high cliff." Robinson (1897): 156. Also, since Indians in the area had a 60-year history of being dragooned into providing the labor for the mission padres and ranchos, the need for their extra effort was probably not taken into consideration when the landing was moved to a more remote location. Given that the next closest port was San Pedro, the extra effort was probably worth it.
17. Dana strangely used a measure of area instead of linear distance here. Given his use of "square feet," perhaps there was, at high tide, a geometrically small area of sand beach.
18. This region does contain "Capistrano Bight," but does not match most of Dana's other accounts of the cove, cliffs, or secluded landing.
19. A common misconception places the landing beach and cliff at the south end of the Dana Point Headlands. Cline (1950) discussed why this is unlikely. Besides the rough surf in this vicinity, the topography would have made it very difficult for carts loaded with hides to access the headlands above this beach.
20. Westdahl (1887).
21. Davidson (1889): 25.
22. The moon phase on Dana's first visit between May 6 and May 7, 1835, was either first quarter or waxing gibbous, placing the low tide in the early afternoon, probably between 1:00 and 2:00 pm. This agrees with his remarks that the tide was lower by the time he reached the top of the cliff. On his October 21st visit, the moon phase was a waning crescent, just a day before a new moon. This would put the low tide at some time in the later afternoon, about 4:30 to 5:00 pm, and the high tide at about 9:30 to 10:00 am. On both of Dana's visits the tide was ebbing throughout at least part of the day.
23. Westdahl (1887); Goode (1889).
24. This is, after all, why it was named "Dana" Cove.
25. Sokolich (1959): 17-25.
26. Ibid, 20.
27. Cline (1950, June): 127-132; Sokolich (1959): 17-25.
28. Davidson assisted on U.S. Coast and Geodetic Coast Survey maps of the region issued in the 1880s. Despite being over 3 miles inland, they include an accurate map of buildings at San Juan Capistrano. Their inclusion is curious, considering these maps were primarily made to show coastal features. This may indicate that Davidson and other members of U.S. government surveys spent time in town and talked to the locals who had some knowledge of the old landing. Westdahl (1887).
29. Davidson (1889): 33. A "shingle" is a beach with small rocks rather than sand, up to about 8 inches in diameter.
30. Thorn (1888).
31. Dana did not anticipate that his book was

going to be a success, perhaps making embellishment more likely. He travelled back to California in 1859 and met with Alfred Robinson, the agent for the Bryant Sturgis & Co. who hastened down the hides from San Juan Capistrano back in 1835. Of the meeting, Dana wrote that he "did not know how he would receive me, remembering what I had printed to the world about him at a time when I took little thought that the world was going to read it; but there was no sign of offence, only a cordiality which gave him, as between us, rather the advantage of status." Dana (1945): 320.

32. Sokolich (1959): 21. The cliffs above the beach at Fisherman's Cove were only about 120 ft. at their maximum height, serving as further evidence that this was not Dana's landing.
33. Some editions of *Two Years Before the Mast* have the line "San Juan is the only romantic spot in California." Dana (1964): 141. Dana was not, however, the first or even the second to describe the vicinity of San Juan Bay as "romantic." The first to do so was the British explorer George Vancouver, who visited San Juan bay on November 26, 1793. Vancouver wrote, "This mission [San Juan Capistrano] is very pleasantly situated in a grove of trees, whose luxuriant and diversified foliage, when contrasted with the adjacent shores, gave it a most romantic appearance; having the ocean in front, and being bounded on its other sides by rugged dreary mountains, where the vegetation was not sufficient to hide the naked rocks, of which the country in this point of view seemed to be principally composed." Vancouver's description of a "grove" of trees agrees with Father Antonio de la Ascension's description of Dana Point, which he called "Punta de Arboleda," or "Grove Point," during the Vizcaino expedition in 1602. Vancouver (1798): 467. Interestingly, Dana was not even the first American to describe the Dana Point area as "romantic." William Shaler, a sea captain originally from Connecticut, visited the coast of California to trade, usually illegally, in his ship the Lelia Byrd in the years 1804, 1805 and 1806. He visited the Dana Point area in 1804 and/or 1805 and wrote that San Juan Capistrano was "close to the sea shore, where there is safe anchorage and good landing nine months of the year. The situation of this mission is very romantic and delightful: in a charming valley, thickly shaded with fine trees, through which runs a fine stream of water. I learnt few particulars respecting the mission of San Juan, but they say it is not inferior in wealth to any in California." Shaler also wrote that he had read Vancouver's book. Dana had access to the Harvard college library and may have read the writings of Vancouver and/or Shaler before travelling to California or while writing *Two Years Before the Mast*. Shaler (1808): 155.
34. The San Juan Rocks were an important obstacle for sailing ships visiting the region and were often recorded by visitors. About half of the main rock, which lies just a couple tenths of a mile from the Dana Point Headlands, was destroyed in a storm in 2017.
35. Before construction of the marina commenced in August of 1966, Dana Point was home to the *Killer Dana Wave*, a celebrated former surfing spot. This wave came off the point and headed towards the cove. One surfer, Corky Carroll, remembered that on "smaller days it wasn't such a 'killer'" and that, compared to Dana Cove itself, the "point was better for surfing." These waves travelled along the eastern edge of the Dana Point Headlands and may have been those referred to by Dana while he sat on the rock. The history of surfing in the region is an interesting story in its own right. Beal (2015): 45-46.
36. Curiously, the fate of these goods is not mentioned. How would they have made it to San Juan Capistrano? At some point while Dana climbed to the top of the cliff, the boat with trade was either taken to the portion of modern-day Doheny Beach east of the mouth of San Juan Creek, or the goods were protected on the landing beach to be picked up later. It may have made sense to drop off Dana to travel to the top of the cliffs while the boat loaded with goods was taken to the other landing beach east of the mouth of San Juan Creek. Perhaps the captain was less concerned about landing the goods in the rougher surf there because they would have been dropped off, making the exit back into the water relatively easy. Had the boats been loaded with hides

while exiting from there, it may have been too difficult or risky to get the boats back through the surf and out into the ocean. The captain may have been concerned that the boats could capsize while loaded with hides, which would have been very costly, necessitating the landing below the cliffs with calmer surf.

37. The small "beach" immediately west of Princess Point was very rocky and covered in surf. The small "ridge" jutting south into the ocean just west of Princess Point had a small and deeply eroded drainage that may have been the route up. The second ridge west of Princess Point jutting into the ocean had a relatively gradual slope covered in chaparral, which was another possible route up (part of this ridge still exists today). It is possible that the route went all the way around Princess Point, but the author could not locate enough early photographs of the region to sufficiently assess this possibility. This route would have been about 2 miles one way with a large portion of the route over rocky coastal terrain. For this reason, this route seems less likely than the others.
38. This description is further evidence that the beach north of Fisherman's Cove was not Dana's beach. The canyons on either side would have made the way up less dramatic.
39. This small canyon, just east of Dana's landing beach, hosts a small waterfall which flows after significant winter storms. A close inspection of early photographs and of the site itself by the author suggests that it could not have been used as a route to the top of the cliffs.
40. Surfing Heritage and Culture Center (2013, March 5). The author investigated Cline's claim that San Juan Capistrano was visible from the "terrace above San Juan Creek" by aligning 1930s film footage from the terrace looking up San Juan Valley with Google Earth. Using Los Pinos Peak and other hills as landmarks, it was determined that the Mission was not visible anywhere along the cliffs, even from their furthest eastern extent above San Juan Creek, which is now bulldozed.
41. Robinson (1897): 41-42.
42. Roberts (1936): 121-122. England and Spain fought between 1796 and 1808 in the Anglo-Spanish War, prompting the Spanish authorities in California to fear a British invasion. The Pryor Adobe may have been constructed in response, acting as a kind of look out for San Juan Capistrano. Bancroft wrote that "In the fear of English invasion which agitated the whole country in 1797, a sentinel was posted on the beach at San Juan [Capistrano] to watch for suspicious vessels, since it was not doubted that England had her eyes upon the cove anchorage [which the British explorer George Vancouver visited in 1793 and pronounced good]. Whether a four pounder was mounted here as recommended by Captain Grajera does not appear." The location of the Pryor Adobe, on the downslope of a hill adjacent to the El Camino Real overlooking and facing the anchorage, suggests that it may have been built to monitor visitors and/or assist in trade. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know for sure because annual mission records include only the dimensions and functions of buildings, but little to nothing concerning their location. Bancroft (1884): 659.
43. George Davidson described the view of San Juan Capistrano from the ocean as "a rather poor mark and on a very limited line of sight for vessels approaching the anchorage in clear weather. The white buildings are well defined against the dark, bold hills, and, as seen from the bay, the village looks somewhat like the old village of Santa Barbara for situation." Davidson (1889): 33.
44. Dana implied that Indians brought the hides up to the cliff when he wrote "Reaching the brow of the hill, where the cart stood, we found several piles of hides, and Indians sitting round them."
45. A route all the way to the Mission was about 4.75 miles. Even on a horse for most of the way, the length of this route would have required Robinson to make very good time on the 9.5 miles round-trip journey. Since Dana implied it only took him an hour or so, it seems more likely he travelled to the much closer Pryor Adobe rather than the Mission.
46. It should be noted that the distance on foot to the Pryor Adobe from the beach at Fisherman's Cove was about 1.6 miles on an eastern route around the cliffs along the San Juan Creek drainage (though it would have been tough going with the silt buildup at the creek's mouth) and about 1.8 miles on a

western route up the small canyon now approximately followed by Golden Lantern Street. These distances line up a little better with Dana writing that it took Robinson an hour or so to complete the journey. That is, if he did it all on foot. The question is, would he have had access to a horse? It seems likely. Contemporary sources indicate that horses were widely available in California at this time and Dana himself rented them easily in Santa Barbara and San Diego. Visiting the area in late November 1842, the artist Edward Vischer remarked that "At another place behind San Juan [Capistrano], the corral was next to the cliff over the beach. It was frightful to see how the poor beasts hurried along the poorly fenced edge, avoiding the uncanny instinct the danger of crashing down the cliff." Perhaps this corral was at the top of the cliffs where Robinson (and Dana) climbed up. It would have made sense to have a corral in this location in order for trading vessels to have access to faster transportation to the Mission or Pryor Adobe. There is no other obvious explanation for the corral's existence in this location. Also, on their second visit, Dana and the crew "set the agent [Robinson] ashore, who went up to the mission to hurry down the hides for the next morning." The only purpose of this was to save time for the next day, perhaps indicating that more than an hour of time was saved by sending Robinson the day before the hides were actually brought down. Vischer (1940): 209.

47. A story told in the early 20th century about an incident that occurred in the 1890s describes what may have been the route that went from San Juan Capistrano to the cliffs. The story tells of a group of people from the Mission who "crossed the dry bed of the Trabuco to the west of town and ascended the hill to the mesa that lies about a hundred feet above the arroyo thence southward to Dana's Point (whence the hides were thrown down to the waiting *Pilgrim* in Dana's classic story) and home from the ocean by the back road." Saunders (1930): 20.
48. Given the effects of erosion, there is no guarantee that the cliffs in the earliest available photographs are similar enough to the way they were in Dana's time to identify the exact location with certainty.
49. This agrees with the lunar phase estimate of low tide being at about 2:00 pm.
50. This stake is further evidence that the cliff must have been an obvious place from which to throw down the hides. There is no obvious alternative utility to the stake other than to assist sailors in scaling the cliff to dislodge hides. On Dana's first trip, when the hides were dislodged by throwing others in their direction, Captain Thompson relayed to Dana that "Had they [the lodged hides] remained there…he should have sent on board for a couple pairs of long halyards [ropes used to access rigging on the ship], and got some one [sic] to go down for them." Captain Thompson was clearly aware of both the problem and its solution. Here too Dana implied that either the captain or one or more of the sailors told the story that "one of the crew of an English brig went down in the same way, a few years before." It is not enough to say for certain, but the stake's existence probably indicates that the problem of hides getting stuck in the recesses of the cliff was a common one.
51. Latin for being obliterated into dust. This line was omitted from most published versions of *Two Years Before the Mast*, but can be found in the Ward Ritchie Press version printed in Los Angeles in 1964. Dana (1964): 200.
52. The author was not able to locate a cliff that perfectly matches Dana's description using early photographs and conducting examinations of the existing cliffs in the field. Cline (1950) comes to the same conclusion, but with the important difference that his fieldwork war prior to Princess Point being bulldozed to make way for the marina.
53. Dana gave two different estimates for the number of hides lodged in the "recesses of the bank." When the hides first got stuck, he wrote that "we were delayed by a dozen or twenty hides which had lodged in the recesses of the bank." After getting the hides down, Dana is scolded by another sailor as a "d----d fool" for risking his life for a "half a dozen hides." This "half a dozen" line is first used on his May visit, when he remarked "...for, six months afterwards, I descended the same place by a pair of top-gallant studding-sail halyards, to save half a dozen hides which

had lodged there." Given that he described the number as "half a dozen hides" in two different instances, perhaps the "dozen or twenty hides" was simply an estimate for how many he believed were stuck prior to finding only "half a dozen" upon their retrieval. The phrase "dozen or twenty" is used throughout *Two Years Before the Mast* as an estimate for about a dozen or so.

54. This begs the question; how did Dana and his companion(s) know the hides were stuck and how did they know exactly where to throw down hides to dislodge those that were? Dana wrote that the stuck hides were "out of sight," which means they either saw that a thrown hide never reached the beach or the crew on the beach somehow communicated what had happened. Given the distance and constant crashing of waves upon the beach, it seems unlikely that the crew at the bottom would have been able to communicate orally with the crew at the top, other than by shouts. It seems more likely that the crew at the top saw where the hides went over the cliff and that they did not reach the beach, giving them an idea of where to throw hides down to dislodge those that were stuck.
55. There is another rounded protrusion of the cliff to the east, just above the western end of the landing beach. This cliff has a less vertical slope towards the top, possibly making it harder to throw hides all the way down to the beach and potentially obscuring the visibility of the bottom of the rope, which Dana claimed he was able to see. For these reasons, it seems a less likely candidate for Dana's cliff.
56. Curiously, these storms from the southeast seem to have subsided by the 1850s. When Dana went back to California in 1859 he was reacquainted with Captain John Wilson, the captain of the *Ayacucho*, a ship involved in the hide trade in the 1830s. Dana wrote that Wilson told him that the "climate has altered; that the south-easters are no longer the bane of the coast they once were, and that vessels now anchor inside the kelp at Santa Barbara and San Pedro all the year round. I should have thought this owing to spending his winters on a rancho instead of the deck of the Ayacucho, had not the same thing been told me by others." Dana (1945): 319.
57. To prepare a ship to "slip its anchor" is to prepare to disconnect the anchor from the windlass and abandon it, making for a more expedient exit to sea.
58. Atherton (1964): 49-50, 91; Cunningham (1958): 37-38; Forbes (1939): 168-169, 330.
59. Ibid.
60. Atherton (1964): 49-50, 91; Cunningham (1958): 37-38; Davidson (1889): 33; Vancouver (1798): 467.

References

Atherton, F. D.
1964 *The California Diary of Faxon Dean Atherton 1836-1839*. California Historical Society, San Francisco, Los Angeles.

Bancroft, H. H.
1884 *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft Volume XVIII History of California Vol. I. 1542-1800.* A.L. Bancroft & Co., San Francisco.

Beal, B. B.
2015 *Surfing & Oceanic Heritage Projects of Dana Point.* The Dana Point Historical Society, Dana Point.

British, U.S., Spanish, & French Governments
1853 *Sailing Directions for the West Coast of North America*. James Imray, 102, Minories, London.

Cline, W.
1950 Jun "Dana at the Point: Discrepancies in the Narrative." *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* 32, 127-132.

Cunningham, C. W.
1958 *Log of the Courier 1826-1827-1828*. Glen Dawson, Los Angeles.

Davidson, G.
1889 *Coast Pilot of California, Oregon, and Washington*. United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, Washington.

Engelhardt, F. Z.
1921 *San Luis Rey Mission*. The James H. Barry Company, San Francisco.

Forbes, A.
1839 *California: A History of Upper and Lower California From Their First Discovery to the Present Time*. Smith, Elder and Co., Cornhill, London.

Goode, R.U.
1899 *California Capistrano Quadrangle*. U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey, Washington.

Jr., R. H.
1945 *Two Years Before the Mast*. Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., New York.
1964 *Two Years Before the Mast*. Lane Book Company, Menlo Park.

Menzies, A., & Eastwood, A.
1924 "Archibald Menzies' Journal of the Vancouver Expedition." *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 265-340.

Mofras, E. D.
2004 *Travels on the Pacific Coast, A Report from California, Oregon, and Alaska in 1841*. The Narrative Press., Santa Barbara.

O'Sullivan, C. F.
1930 *Capistrano Nights*. Robert M. McBride & Company, New York.

Palóu, F.
1913 *Francisco Palou's Life and Apostolic Labors of the Venerable Father Junípero Serra, Founder of the Franciscan Missions of California*. George Wharton James, Pasedena.

Roberts, C. E.
1936 *Orange County Adobes*. Works Progress Administration, Santa Ana.

Robinson, A.
1897 *Life in California*. William Doxey, San Francisco.

Shaler, W.
1808 *The American Register, or General Repository of History, Politics and Science Part I for 1808* (V.3). C. & A. Conrad, Philadelphia.

Sokolich, J.
1959 "Dana and the Perennial Questions." *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* 41(1), 17-25.

Surfing Heritage and Culture Center
2013 Mar *Historic Dana Point (1933-1939)*. Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHApzQmBPaA&t=239s

Thorn, F.
1888 *San Juan Capistrano and Vicinity*. U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Washington.

U. S. Geological Survey
1948 *Dana Point, California*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Reston, Va.

Vancouver, C. G.
1798 *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World Vol. II*. G. G. and J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row; and J. Edwards, Pall-Mall, London.

Vischer, E. G.
n.d. "Drawing by Vischer of Cliff Passage at Beach near San Juan Capistrano by Moonlight." *California Historical Society*. USC Libraries Special Collections, L.A..
1940 "Edward Vischer's First Visit to California." *California Historical Society Quarterly* 19(3), 209.

Wagner, H. R.
1966 *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America in the Sixteenth Century*. Amsterdam: N. Israel.

Westdahl, F.
1887 *Section X Hydrography of San Juan Capistrano Bay*. U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Washington.

Wilkes, C.
1849 *Western America, including California and Oregon*. Leaand Blanchard, Philadelphia.

Wilson, J. A.
1880 *History of Los Angeles County California*. Thompson & West, Oakland.

Monthly Roundup . . .

December 2017

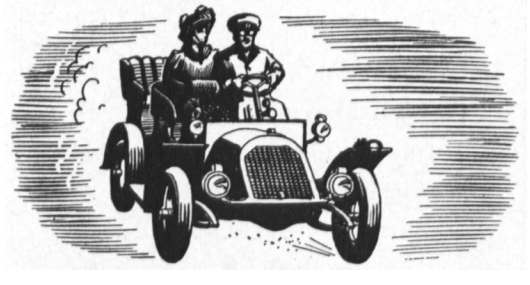
Peter Blodgett

The guest for the Corral's December Roundup was Peter Blodgett from the Huntington Library, who spoke about early Western motoring history in "Pioneering Motor Tourists in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1900-1920." With the automobile, Americans were able to cross the country much faster than their pioneer ancestors. Motorists could now visit places beyond the end of the rail lines. They could, in fact, go anywhere they pleased, so long as they had a car and fuel (and tires and spare parts for the inevitable breakdowns). Brave motorists did not let the lack of proper roads deter them. A study in 1904, Blodgett informed us, found that only 7% of the nation's roads were paved. That changed as cars became more and more popular.

At first, automobiles were luxury items that only the well-to-do could afford for touring around the West. Prices ranged from $875 for a 1915 Studebaker to $3,250 for a 1913 Lozier. This tidy sum not only purchased personal mobility, but also a sort of time travel. According to the the car advertisements of the era, motorists could retrace the routes of wagon trains and visit places untouched by modernity, like the Camino Real or the California Missions. Rail companies like the Southern Pacific Railroad attempted to capitalize on all of the tourism that cars were generating in the American West by offering train rides to spots of interest, whereupon tourists could rent a car to explore. They were seemingly unaware that as cars became more reliable and more affordable, people would just start driving the full distance and avoid the train altogether.

As automobile ownership became more widespread, advertisers were quick to attach a wide variety of related (or not so related) products to the car's mystique. No self-respecting motorist could drive without a $1.50 Cluett shirt, Wells Fargo traveler's checks, or a Hawkeye Picnic Refrigerator. By the 1920s, the U.S. road network had exploded in size, making for much busier maps than those of the turn of the century. Thanks to the demands of automobile tourism, there were even plans for a Grand Circuit route of the National Parks. In less than two decades, cars had gone from novelties to necessities. They now occupy a dominant position in our lives and will continue to do so until an even more revolutionary successor comes along. The call of the Open Road was—and is—too strong for us.

— Aaron Tate



January 2018

Brian Dervin Dillon

The story of the Irish in America is replete with stereotypes. Some of these are humorous, such as how a six-pack of Guinness and a potato constitute an Irish "seven-course meal." Others are less humorous but far more pernicious by passing off errors as facts. Conventional historical "wisdom" myopically fixates on the misery and discrimination faced by post-Famine Irish immigrants on the American East Coast. Few of the many books on Irish-American history leave the historiographical prisons of Boston or New York City. To kick off the first Roundup of 2018, our 2017 Sheriff Brian D. Dillon uncovered the overlooked history of the Irish in the American West in his presentation, "California, the Irish Paradise."

The causes of the Irish diaspora are long and tragic. Well before the English founded Jamestown, Henry VIII made Ireland, in effect, England's first colony. The English treated the "Wild Irish" as little more than savages, and later applied the same outlook and methods towards American Indians. In the centuries of English oppression that followed, some Irish fled to Continental Europe, and others found a home in Latin America. Many more, of course, left for North America. Irish Americans were numerous enough to be the primary diggers of the Erie Canal as early as the 1820s, but the flow of Irish to the United States became a torrent after the Potato Famine of 1845-49. This natural disaster, exacerbated by English callousness, caused the deaths of ¼ of the Irish population, and forced another quarter to emigrate to the United States.

Irish immigrants faced a cold reception in the United States, at least on the East Coast. Racist yankee WASPs held Blacks and the Irish in equal loathing, and frequently depicted both as subhuman ape-men in political cartoons. Compared to African Americans, however, who were usually stereotyped as harmless buffoons, the Irish appeared in countless newspapers and magazines as drunken, violent (and *Catholic!*) psychopaths.

Nevertheless, the Irish found opportunity and acceptance, not in the East, but in the West. Some of the earliest California Gold Rush '48ers were Irish, freshly deserted from the U.S. Army after the Mexican-American War. California quickly became the best place in the world to be Irish, far from the oppression of the English and the bigotry of the Eastern Seaboard. Here, Irish American Peter Donahue's iron foundries were the largest of their kind anywhere along the Pacific Rim. John Downey became the first Irish American governor of any U.S. state in 1860. Irish Americans openly formed armed militias (including a nascent *Irish Republican Army*) dedicated to the Emerald Isle's independence from Britain. These possibilities, and more, were only possible in California.

Thankfully, the freedom Irish Americans first found in the Golden State in the 19th century is enjoyed nationwide today. Twelve percent of Americans declared Irish ancestry as of the 2000 U.S. Census, but if the popularity of St. Patrick's Day is any indication, being Irish is a state of mind available to all. The Westerners thank Brian D. Dillon for sharing this fascinating look into this little-known chapter in U.S. immigration history.

For more information on the Irish in California, see Dillon's article in the *California Territorial Quarterly* for March 2017.

— John Dillon

February 2018

Jeanette Davis

On March 26, 1846, an advertisement on the *Saginaw Journal* read: "Westward, Ho! Who wants to go to California without it costing them anything? Come boys, you can have as much land as you want without it costing you anything…the first suitable persons who apply will be employed." Placed by George Donner Jr., the advertisement marked the beginning of the Donner Party's harrowing journey from Illinois to California. For our February roundup, the L.A. Corral was honored to host long-time Westerner and Donner descendant, Jeanette Davis, who shared the tragic story of her ancestors.

The Donners embodied mid-19th century American optimism and drive. George Donner Sr. fought in the Revolutionary War and became a successful farmer. By 1846, sons George Jr. and Jacob had settled in Saginaw County, IL. Standing 6 ft. tall "with merry black eyes," those who knew George described him as easy-going, hard-working, and smart. By 1846, he had married Tamsen Donner, his third wife. Jacob, George's brother, was married to Elizabeth Lou Hook. Both brothers looked for better opportunities out west in California.

Lansford Hastings' *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon & California* advised would-be western migrants to arrive at Independence, MO by April 15 so as to be ready to continue westward on or before May 1, lest they fail to cross mountainous country before it rained or snowed in the fall. Unfortunately for the Donner Party, which consisted primarily of the George Donner Jr. and Jacob Donner families as well as the James Reed family, this crucial bit of advice was ignored. On April 15, 1846 the Donner Party set out not from Independence, MO but from Springfield, IL.

The promise of adventure and the hope for a new life soon turned into a struggle for survival. After crossing the Wasatch Mountains in Utah, the exhausted Donner Party unwisely rested for too many days. Valuable time was lost during days of little or no travel. Equally unwise was their decision to take the Hastings Cutoff; this "shortcut" had never been traveled by wagons or by a group as large, or with as many children, as the Donner Party. They were slowed down by clogged canyons, boulder-strewn riverbeds, and steep descents; some days they only advanced half a mile. Their terrible luck was exacerbated by historic amounts of snowfall.

Exhausted and demoralized after a week's rest at Truckee Meadows (present-day Reno), the Donner Party ceased to operate as a cohesive unit; every family fended for itself. Vain attempts were made to cross the mountain pass near Truckee Lake. Twenty-two feet of snow fell, trapping the party. At Alder Creek, both Donner families sheltered themselves as best they could. Starving, cold, and restless, the party endured unthinkable conditions. They ate boiled-down hides and bones, shoelaces, book covers, and even family pets. Ultimately, of the 81 persons trapped by the snow over two-thirds of the men, one-third of the children, and one-quarter of the women died. Only the families of James Reed and Patrick Breen remained intact.

Not surprisingly, the story of the Donner Party gave rise to morbid tales of cannibalism. But thanks to the survivors of that tragic winter of 1846-1847, the Donner Party legacy was reclaimed, recognizing those who survived for their endurance and strength in the face of such adversity.

The Los Angeles Corral of Westerners would like to thank Jeannette Davis for sharing with us the Donner Party's extraordinary story, a tale both tragic and heroic.

— Dennis Bermudez

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

THE NATURE OF CALIFORNIA: Race, Citizenship, and Farming since the Dust Bowl, by Sarah D. Wald. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2016. 297 pp. $28.95.

Sarah D. Wald introduces her forcefully written and prodigiously researched study elaborating the misleading icon of the American farmer with a description of the Super Bowl commercial of 2013. This memorable ad for Dodge Ram pickup trucks certainly matches the Budweiser Clydesdales for universal and sentimental appeal: Paul Harvey's voice delivers his "God Made a Farmer" speech, concluding that a Dodge Ram truck is meant for "the farmer in us all." The commercial shows white, weather-beaten men gazing soulfully across the fields.

Wald points out that at the time this commercial aired, the United Farmworkers Union was launching a social media campaign entitled "Take Our Jobs." Whereas Dodge Ram identified the God-made farmer as a white man with the resources to buy a new truck, the UFW campaign pointed out that the food supply Americans enjoy actually depends on the back-breaking stoop labor of undocumented workers. The invitation to "Take Our Jobs" challenged U.S. citizens to step up to this hard reality. Stephen Colbert, in a comic sketch on late night TV, took a stab at learning to build boxes, pick, and pack alongside Latino workers, but soon retreated to his laptop to play the computer game *FarmVille*.

From Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur's "Letter from an American Farmer" [1782] and Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia ["those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God," 1785] to Dodge Ram at the Super Bowl, agrarianism has occupied a central stage in our idea of American democracy. Wald points out that the black plantation slave and the Asian or Latino immigrant laborer, while essential to agricultural production, have not been allowed full "citizenship" in this idealized de-

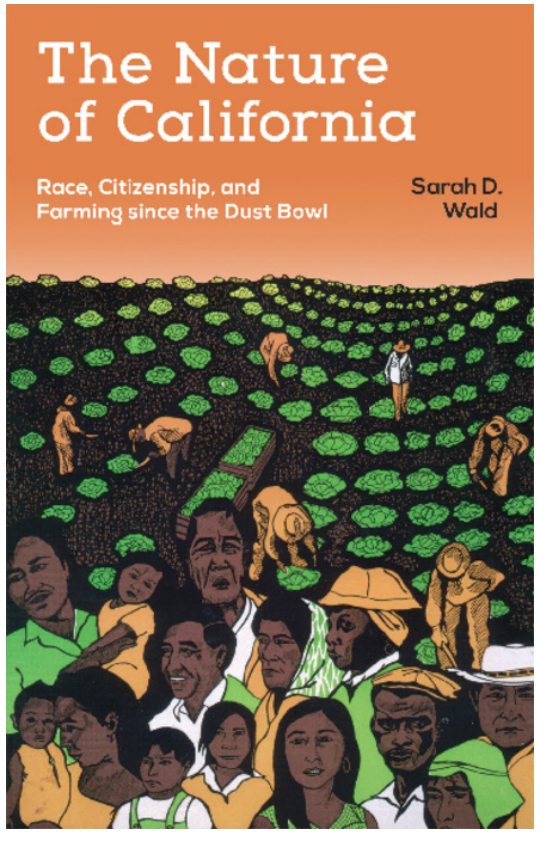


Image courtesy of Project MUSE.edu.

mocracy. Wald's study considers the delicate titrations between farmers and farmworkers, between race and citizenship, between agriculture as a sacred ideal and agriculture as very hard physical work, in California from 1929 through the Dust Bowl years [the 1930s] until 2014. She shows how "California's Edenic image requires farmworkers' invisibility, suggesting that the abundant luscious fruit of the Central Valley comes from God's hand, not from the many brown, black, and yellow hands that maintain the landscape that produces the fruit."

The Nature of California morphs to a double entendre which refers to the ever-increasing interest in "ecology" and in, say, the National Parks Movement. Throughout the book, Wald tips her ideological hand with sentences like "Re-creating the wilderness as a peopleless landscape obscures the history

of genocide upon which the United States was founded." And "national parks offered, in part, a proving ground for white American masculinity… and were one of the sites where white men could live what Theodore Roosevelt called 'the strenuous life.' Preserving the nation's white manhood by protecting pristine nature became one front in Roosevelt's war against 'race suicide.'"

Wald represents an already robust movement in cultural studies—one in which white American citizens, in a cloud of Malthusian anxiety, are perceived as protecting themselves from the expanding populations of immigrating "ecological others." This point seems apposite in our present political moment of immigration bans and deportations. But Wald stakes some fresh claims, as well. California, she points out, shines paramount in the story of American agriculture. The late California historian Kevin Starr called all this "the California Dream." Wald illuminates the dream in seven chapters which address, especially, the way literary representations of immigrant farmworkers [including those from Oklahoma] tell her story. Chapter 6, my favorite, describes the United Farm Workers and the Modern Environmental Movement. In this chapter, discussions of Cesar Chavez, Peter Matthiessen, John Steinbeck, and Rachel Carson convene.

I love this book. My parents were immigrants and truck [Dodge] farmers. Their goals included both avoiding pesticides and ensuring that their many kids could grow up to read and review books. Because of my early experience, no doubt, I found this book absolutely fascinating—but really, I think anyone would.

— Margaret R. Ellsberg

GUNFIGHTER IN GOTHAM: Bat Masterson's New York City Years, by Robert K. DeArment. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. 304 pp. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Hardbound, $29.95. www.oupress.com.

First published in a limited edition in 2005 as *Broadway Bat*, Robert K. DeArment offers his biography of William Barclay "Bat" Masterson in a revised edition that adds new information to his earlier work. Masterson is mainly remembered as a Western lawman and gunfighter, the hero of a hit television series in the 1960s that largely fictionalized his life. Previous biographies have ignored the last two decades of Masterson's life, simply noting that he left the West to become a sports writer for a newspaper in New York City. This book remedies the biographical gap as DeArment provides a richly detailed narrative of Masterson's journalistic career.

When Masterson left Denver for New York City in 1902, he already had some experience in journalism. What motivated him to go to New York was his lifelong interest in boxing and the opportunity to write a column for the New York *Morning Telegraph*, a

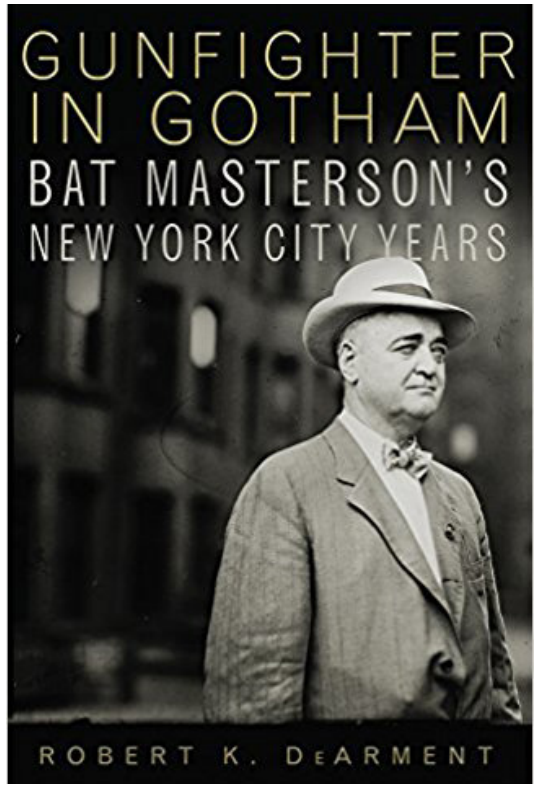


Image courtesy of Amazon.com.

paper that gave major coverage to sports. Masterson wrote a regular column every week until his death at age 67 in 1921. He occasionally wrote about other topics, but his main focus was on prize fighting. His columns were highly opinionated as he showed no hesitation in inveighing against mediocre boxers, crooked promoters, female suffrage, the prohibition movement, and any other topic where he took a stand.

Masterson described himself as a "Broadway guy," but his reputation as a gunfighter, and a general public belief in an exaggerated number of men he allegedly killed, made him a formidable figure against anyone who aroused his ire. At the same time, he enjoyed the friendship of many people who enjoyed boxing as a spectator sport (and one that attracted gamblers and shady characters who fixed bouts). Friends ranged from President Theodore Roosevelt to such noted journalist colleagues as Heywood Broun and Grantland Rice, and author Damon Runyon.

DeArment assesses the popularity of Masterson's sports columns, but he doesn't whitewash Bat's shortcomings. For much of his life Masterson was a gambler, never winning much more than his losses. He often misjudged the abilities of prizefighters and bet against his better judgment, a failing he readily admitted but couldn't control. He lost money on the Jack Dempsey-Jess Willard heavyweight title fight because his personal dislike for Dempsey overrode his awareness that Willard was past his prime.

By modern standards Masterson was not an old man when he died in 1921; in his last years he was in poor health, and a heart attack claimed his life while he was at his desk in the *Morning Telegraph* office. He lived long enough to see old friends from his years out West pass away, and his own passing brought eulogies from colleagues who praised his efforts to promote boxing as a legitimate sport. DeArment's book provides an awareness of a long neglected part of the life of a famous Western figure who had a major career back East. It's not a coincidence that Bat's friend Damon Runyon named his leading character Sky Masterson in Guys and Dolls.

— Abraham Hoffman.

FROM OUR FILES

50 Years Ago
#86 – March 1968

Few people could claim to have interviewed and photographed a living witness of the Mexican-American War. Earle R. Forrest of the Los Angeles Corral belonged to this exclusive club, and in the first *Branding Iron* of 1968 he wrote about his 1903 meeting with the very old Henry Guild of Oracle, Arizona. Tennessee-born Guild was crippled by polio as a boy, so he followed his older brothers in the Mexican War as a unit "mascot." Guild's disability later prevented him from prospecting for gold out West, but he found his own fortune as a cook for an endless procession of mining camps, and finally for a ranch at Oracle. Forrest lamented that he hadn't asked Guild enough questions, and never saw him again after 1904.

An obituary by A. Stevens Halsted Jr. celebrated the life of Donald W. Hamblin (1908-1968), the Corral's resident expert on California legal history—a natural field for a Los Angeles Superior Court judge. His hobbies included collecting (inanimate) owls and cartoon lithographs of British barristers.

In Western art history news, Tuscon columnist Don Schellie rediscovered the long-missing side panels of Cassilly Adams' 1884 battle painting, *Custer's Last Fight.* The recovered panels completed a biographical scene, with Custer as a boy playing soldier on the left, and his dead body on the right.

— John Dillon