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The Log of the Princesa: By Estevan Jose Martinez

What Does It Contribute to Our Knowledge of the Nootka Sound Controversy?

By

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With the Compliments of the Author

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THE LOG OF THE PRINCESA BY ESTEVAN MARTINEZ.

What does it contribute to our Knowledge of the Nootka Sound Controversy?

By Herbert Ingram Priestley

Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of the Northwest Coast* was published 36 years ago—in 1884. In volume I of that work he gives an account of the Nootka Sound Controversy. In 1904 Professor William Ray Manning published his extensive inquiry into that affair, availing himself of manuscript materials in Spain and elsewhere which were inaccessible to Bancroft. In one very important particular Manning was unable to add to the account by Bancroft. The latter says, (p. 212.) "I have not been able to obtain the original diaries of the Spanish expedition of 1789; nor has any previous writer in English seen them;" Manning quotes this, and says (p. 342 *note*) that Revilla-Gigedo, writing to Valdez, Mexico, Dec. 27, 1789, "states that a copy of Martínez' diary is inclosed, but a note on a small slip of paper inserted says that the diary is not being sent on account of Martínez not having sent a duplicate of it. The diary does not appear in the bundle, and probably never was sent."

This diary, or more properly log, of which a copy is now in the Bancroft Library of the Academy of Pacific Coast History, bears the caption, *Diaro de la navegacion que yo el alférez de navi'o de Real Armada Don Estevan Josef Marti'nez, boy a executar al puerto de San Lorenzo de Nuca, mandando la fragata Princesa, y paquebot San Carlos, de orden de el Exmo Señor Don Manuel Antonio Florez, Virey, Governador, y Capitan-General de Nueva España, en el presente añ de 1789.* The original log is a notebook of 144 pages, with 2 of introduction. The copy of it, which serves as the basis of this

paper, was secured from the *Depo'sito Hidrogra'fico de Madrid* by the late Professor Henry Morse Stephens for the Academy of Pacific Coast History. An English translation of the copy has been made by William L. Schurz, sometime Travelling Fellow of the Native Sons of the Golden West. It is of interest to note what new light the log sheds upon the motives and actions of the Spanish commander, as compared with the published accounts.

The first discrepancy between the log and the account by Bancroft is seen in the statement from *Haswell's Voyage,* MS in the Bancroft Library, (*Northwest Coast,* Vol I, p. 213, *note.*) that Martínez told Capt. Gray, when he met the latter outside the entrance to Nootka Sound early in May, that he had fitted for his voyage at Cadiz, and then, reshipping with natives of California, had been to Behring Strait, where he had parted from his consort in a gale. The farthest north of the 1789 voyage was 50° 26′, reached May 2; Haswell probably misunderstood Martínez, who must have been describing his voyage of 1788, to be speaking of his present undertaking. This explains the "strange account" which Bancroft says Martínez gave of himself to Gray and later to Douglas.

On the negative testimony which Dr. Manning adduces from Meares' failure to record whether he had left his house standing or not when he sailed in 1788 from Nootka for Hawaii, the log adds nothing positive, but some negative evidence, for Martínez makes no reference of any kind to any English establishment, or remnant of one, tho' he does make frequent reference to the houses of the natives, which he visited. If any foreign building had been there, he would have seen it, and would very probably have mentioned it.

The story of the log which narrates the controversy over the instructions under which the *Iphigenia* sailed, is, that these were submitted to Martínez on May 8, when requested, but being long, they were left with him to be copied. It was not until May 13 that Martínez seized the *Iphigenia,* and on

the 17th he obtained the bond of Viana and Douglas to surrender the *Iphigenia* if the Viceroy should declare her a good prize. The reason for releasing the vessel Martínez gives: it is his lack of men and provisions to take the captured vessel to San Blas and at the same time secure Nootka. By May 24, he says, "I have reflected thoroughly that a different construction could be placed upon the instructions which were presented to me on the 8th inst., by . . . Viana, . . . they being written in Portuguese, of which no one in our ship is master." The *Iphigenia* was released on May 25, after its officers had been admonished to cease trading at Nootka. It is apparent from the above that Manning's criticism (p. 320) that Martínez was silent as to his real reason for releasing the *Iphigenia* will have to be modified by the log entry for May 24, above cited.

As to the moot question of the quantity of supplies restored to Douglas, the diary gives no information in detail, except to say that on May 31, just before she sailed, the vessel received "the artillery, balls, powder, and other stores with which she had been fitted," and that the provisions which he furnished her were intended to last for the voyage to the Sandwich Islands. They must have been ample for this, as the *Iphigenia* spent a month on the coast before departing for Hawaii, as Manning notes.

Concerning the plea recorded by Douglas, made to Martínez, that he had entered Nootka in distress, Martínez says not a word, tho' he does give a circumstantial account (May 8) of the reasons given by Kendrick for entering. Neither is there any hint in the log that there was unusual objection by the English to the treatment which they received as prisoners. It is regrettable also that neither the first nor the second translations of the instructions to Viana are in the log, as from them might be gathered some knowledge as to what frankness Martínez showed in his effort to understand the situation. We have on this point only the entry of May 24th, above men-

tioned. Attention may be called also to the fact that Martínez does not speak of any attempt to get an order from Douglas to Funter requiring him to sell the *Northwest America* to the Spaniard.

The log account of the reception accorded to the *Northwest America,* Capt. Funter, which put back into Nootka, after a northern cruise for pelts, on June 8th, is as follows: ". . . As soon as it was within a proper distance, I ordered two launches manned, and they towed it inside this port, where it cast anchor at 8:30 at night. The captain and pilot, Robert Funter and Thomas Bennett, immediately came to greet me. I had them stay to supper, and they returned on board their vessel at 11 at night."

"Tuesday, June 9, 1789, at 7 a. m., I ordered my first pilot, José Tovar, the carpenter and the calker and the secretary, to examine that vessel and make an inventory of whatever she contained that was useful and that might be of service. When they had done so, they found that the whole bottom of the ship was rotten and eaten through by shipworms, and that in order to make her serviceable it would be necessary to rebuild her almost entirely. In view of the report which they presented to me, I determined to receive whatever she contained that was serviceable beside the cargo that she carried. I kept . . . of all this . . . an inventory, ... made at once, and [have it] in my possession. . . . Everything must remain unsettled until we receive the decision . . . of . . . the Viceroy, to whom I will render a proper account, to see if this vessel and her contents constitute a good prize. [This depends on] whether she is bound by the instructions which the captain of the Portuguese packet *Iphigenia* presented to me, and whether this ship as well as the other belongs to Don Juan Carvalho . . ." In this we find no pique at inability to buy the vessel, as Meares claimed (Manning, p. 325), which amply justifies his action as a partisan of his king. The accounts of Meares, Douglas,

and Funter were written at dates much later than the log, hence ought to be of less credibility.

With respect to the arrival of the *Princess Royal,* Capt. Hudson, at Nootka June 15, the log adds to Dr. Manning's account the fact that Martínez remained aboard of her outside the Sound on the night of her arrival for the definite purpose of preventing her departure before he could learn particulars of her voyage and purpose—his act thus being in keeping with the sense of his instructions to prevent trade with the natives, or surprise to himself. Manning's criticism that Martínez was inconsistent in releasing Hudson may be explained by the belief of Martínez that Hudson was warned that if he was found trading with the natives he would be taken prisoner—as transpired upon the reappearance of the *Princess Royal* at a later date. Hudson stated that "he had acted in the belief that this port as well as the coast belonged to the English crown, as discoveries made by Captain James Cook. However, I convinced him . . . that I had anticipated Cook by three years and eight months; . . . he could confirm this by . . . Joseph Ingraham, who had noted it in his log from the knowledge which he had gained from the Indians of the region."

In the matter of the seizure of the *Argonaut* and the arrest of Capt. Colnett and his crew, it is to be observed that Manning used the report of Martínez to Florez, as well as the accounts by Colnett, Gray, Ingraham, and Duffin; of these latter, only the last named was a contemporary account. I shall set forth briefly how the log agrees in general with the letter to Florez, and what it adds, as well as how the spirit of the Duffin account substantiates in many ways the Martínez point of view.

The log is, as was the letter to Florez, quite silent as to any pretense of distress on the Spanish vessels as a reason why Colnett should enter the port to succor them, tho' it does say that it was Martínez who ordered the *Argonaut* towed

into port, where it was anchored, against Colnett's wishes, by chains between the two Spanish ships, and under the guns of the fort. Permission to anchor at Cook's old anchorage was refused to Colnett "seeing that this was merely a pretext to get away from us so that, secure from harm, he could leave with less risk to continue his way, or proceed to some place where he could act to better advantage."

Events of July 3rd, the day of the quarrel between Colnett and Martínez, not chronicled by Dr. Manning, and included in the log, state that the boatswain reported after daybreak that Colnett had "taken his boat before sunrise and had gone outside the port and around the hill on which the fort of San Miguel is situated. He was apparently reconnoitering the fortifications. . . . Soon after he came inside, he made toward the beach, along which he coasted . . . and examined the cooper shop and the forge, . . . [Colnett's account of this investigation is that he did these things in company with Martínez.] Colnett failed to hoist his colors at sunrise, until ordered so to do by Martínez, when he displayed "a blue English flag at bow and stern, and at the mainmast, instead of a streamer, a broad pennant of the same color with a white square in the center. He thus gave me to understand . . . that he was an officer of high rank."

Shortly afterward, Martínez demanded Colnett's passport, instructions, and invoice of cargo. Colnett excused himself from producing them, on the plea that his chests were in great disorder. He was then allowed to drop his anchor, and take his time in finding his papers. Martínez accompanied him to his vessel. Here it was noted that the cargo of the *Argonaut* contained supplies for expected vessels and material for building others. Colnett stated that he came as governor of a colony, and gave some account of his plans.

Having heard these, Martínez told him that he could not allow him to carry them out; then, refusing an invitation to supper, he returned to the *Princesa*. In the afternoon, Colnett

wrote a friendly note requesting the use of Martínez' launch in raising his anchor and setting sail the following morning. "I saw then that the reasons which he had given me in the morning for not presenting the papers which I had demanded were merely pretexts for not showing them, so that he could delay until he could find a favorable opportunity to get away." Martínez therefore refused assistance until Colnett should place the papers in his hands. Colnett then went on board the *Princesa* and showed his passport, but refused to show his instructions, which, he said, were addressed to himself alone. A moment later, he asserted that he had no instructions other than his passport, and demanded an instant reply to his request for the Spaniard's launch, that he might set sail at once. Being again refused until he should show his instructions, he announced his determination to sail at once, "and if I did not like it, I might fire at him, for he was not afraid of us. He accompanied this talk by placing his hand two or three times on his sword, which he wore at his belt, as if to threaten me in my own cabin. He added in a loud voice the evil sounding and insulting words, 'G—d d——d Spaniard.' . . . I decided that if I let him go free from my deck, I would thereby suffer the arms of his Catholic Majesty to be dishonored. Many, too, would think that I had failed to act, through fear, though I had no reason to be afraid, since I was superior in force to Colnett." Then, to avoid a conflict with possible loss of life, and for fear Colnett would sail at once to London to report, Martínez says, he arrested the Englishman and his crew, and took over the ship.

Thus the log corrects Dr. Manning's statement (p. 334) that everything seems to have been harmonious on the morning of July 3, for at the outset Colnett began the day by suspicious actions and haughty disregard of Martínez' claim to the sovereignty of the land. He followed this by an ill-timed disclosure of his purposes in Nootka, resorting to patent misrepresentation in saying that he could not find his papers to

show them. If it be objected that we are here taking Martínez' testimony in his own cause, it is yet plain that his account of the quarrel and arrest in the cabin written at the moment have quite as much air of verisimilitude as the accounts of the other participants, which were equally partisan, and were written later. Notice also Duffin's letter of July 14 [13], in Meares' *Voyage,* cited by Dr. Manning (p. 336), wherein the writer calls attention to Colnett's refusal at Duffin's request, to "draw out every particular concerning our being captured. . . . His objection is that he has involved himself . . . in difficulties that he is not able to extricate himself from. . . ." Manning's conjecture is that this refusal was for shame of his (Colnett's) insanity; it is quite as reasonable to conjecture that it was due to the fact that he had been rash in putting himself in a situation where seizure was the normal outcome of his actions. It is noticeable that Duffin's account, the one written by the only sane English participant, exculpates Martínez from the charge of harshness, and puts the blame for the situation upon Colnett by implication, in his letter in Meares' *Voyage,* Appendix.

With regard to the capture of the *Princess Royal,* Capt. Hudson, which returned to Nootka July 13, the log adds to Bancroft's account, which merely states the event in a dozen words, and to the more detailed narrative of Manning, the assertion that when Hudson put off to the shore in his boat he was disguised as a common seaman. He was, as the English accounts have it also, taken from his boat onto the Spanish launch sent to meet him, and disarmed; but his boat succeeded in eluding the capturing launch, made off to an inlet too narrow for the latter, and attempted to speak to Colnett on the captured packet. This, Martínez refused to permit, unless the crew should surrender themselves, to be taken on board his frigate. (Log pp. 130-131.) "As soon as I had descended to my cabin and found Hudson there, I commanded him to write an order directing his sloop to enter the

harbor. He begged off, saying that he could not give it unless he should first see his commander. . . He said furthermore that he had a good crew to defend it, with the guns loaded, and with orders that if they say any boats approaching, to fire on them without letting them draw close.

"I was cognizant of the order which he had given, and knew that there was no way to make him do as I had commanded, in spite of the fact that I had given him to understand that he was as much my prisoner as were those of the packet. I accordingly ordered the pilot Mondofia, in the presence of Hudson, to arm the launches and . . . bring the sloop inside. I commanded him that [if the crew fired] he should . . . seize her by force, putting the crew to the sword without quarter. I also gave Hudson to understand . . . that if the crew offered resistance I would have him hanged at the yard arm. . . . He [then] wrote out an order to his men to surrender." . . . He requested me that before the launches should leave, I should send his own boat with my men and one of his own, to give the countersign and warn them not to fire. When once on board, they would hand over the letter. Then, when the launches should arrive, his men would surrender without resistance." This was done, and the launches took the sloop on the 13th, without resistance.

The remainder of the log subsequent to the seizures, is concerned with the details of the Spanish occupation, and with contributions to the ethnography and topography of the region, gathered from the log of Ingraham and from observation. There is, so far as I know, no disagreement as to these features of the Nootka occupation. Nor does the log shed any light on further happenings in Mexico pursuant to the arrival of the seized vessels there. A discrepancy is found between the log and published account of Dr. Manning, taken from the report of Revilla-Gigedo to Valdez, Mexico, p. 212,—to the effect that upon his departure for San Blas Martínez seized two American vessels and took them with him. The account of the log is

that he took only one, the *Fair America,* commanded by the son of Captain Metcalf. Another vessel, . . . young Metcalf recognized as his father's, was given chase, but escaped.

Concerning the manifest favor with which Martínez treated Gray and Kendrick, the log says: (entry of Oct. 30) "The sloop Washington continued her voyage, not in making discoveries, as was said, but rather in the collection of furs, which is the principal object of the nations;" I might have taken [these American vessels] prisoners, but I had no orders to do so, and my situation did not permit it. I treated this enemy as a friend, I turned over to him 187 skins to be sold on my account in Canton, the proceeds to be turned over to the Spanish ambassador in Boston for the benefit of the Crown.

"Capt. John Kendrick informed me that he had not yet fulfilled his commission, and asked me if he might maintain himself on the coast the following year after going to Sandwich and Canton. I told him he might if he carried a Spanish passport, as he said he expected to do, and that in that case he should buy for me in Macao two ornaments for the mass, and seven pairs of boots for the officers of the *San Carlos* and my vessel, but I believe nothing of that will come to pass."

Dr. Manning says (p. 360) that there is ground for dispute as to the justice or injustice of the seizures at Nootka. The double character of the *Iphigenia* he mentions as a "harmless trick, meant only to deceive the Celestials." It ought to be more difficult to harmonize this judgment with probability, seeing that the only Celestials whom it would be profitable to deceive were across the Pacific, than to harmonize the act of appearing under Portuguese colors with the fact that Spain and Portugal were, since the *rapprochement* during the War of American Independence, on more friendly terms with each other than was either with England; hence a Portuguese vessel would run less risk on the Northwest Coast than would an Englishman. It is to be observed that the instructions to

Martínez by Florez did not mention the Portuguese at all, while they did particularize on the treatment to be accorded to English, Russian, and American vessels. The account of the quarrel with Colnett would seem to offer evidence that the acute situation was caused quite as much by the arrogance of Colnett as by misunderstanding on the part of Cañizares the interpreter. We have not yet a perfectly unbiased account of what really did happen at Nootka, nor shall we, in all likelihood, ever have. What we have is another statement of the case, by an active, competent, though naturally prejudiced participant. The fact that the Martínez diary was a daily entry, and that this fair copy of it was made at San Blas, before question of the events made by the viceroy could affect its purport, make it the best available source on affairs at Friendly Cove in the summer of 1789.