

Woodward, Arthur

1940 Journals of Two Voyages to San Nicolas Island, California; April 10 - April 28, 1940 and November 23 - December 12, 1940. Unpublished field notes. On file, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Transcribed and edited by Steven J. Schwartz.

In keeping with customary practice, the text of the document was lightly edited and modernized in order to make it more understandable to the contemporary reader, while maintaining style and tone, and particularly, content.

Wednesday - April 10, 1940

Up at 6 - picked up Harry Geiger at his apt. on Sanborn Ave. Barker was to have driven me to the dock, but Helms called him. I drove him to work. Elanor went with me to boat. Sally Hollenbach drove the car back from the harbor for me. We went on board [Velero III], Capt. [Allan] Hancock had not arrived. We ate breakfast about 8 and sailed about 8:30. Weather foggy over head but gives signs of clearing.

En route out of the harbor we saw a Norwegian ship that had just pulled in and was tying up at the wharf. We also saw a Swedish ship loading. On the dock beside her, fuselage painted in maroon grey camouflage and engine place ... and insignia covered with green both were 6 or 7 twin engined bombers ready for loading. This brings the latest war developments home. Yesterday Germany invaded Norway and Denmark. This looks like the beginning of the real war.

Distance to San Nicolas from San Pedro is about 74 miles. Party consists of Jack Von Bloeker [Jr.] and his wife Ona, George Kanakoff, Harry Geiger, Leo Kartman, Chris Henne, Arthur Woodward. Dr. [John] Comstock accompanied us as far as San Nicolas.

We dropped the launch beside at 2:40 pm headed for the beach. Sunny and n.w. wind, long swells. Felt slightly nauseated all the way over.

Thursday - April 11, 1940

Weather clear - sunny, no fog. Up at sunrise - sea smooth but then long swells. Surf sounds large. Feel somewhat better today stomach a bit sore. Wrote Henderson's article on ..... last evening. At this season of the year the shore looks greener than it did last July. The boys did not make for home last night. Breakers too high. Ground swell breaking far out, boats returned.

After lunch around 1:15 we went ashore with the motor boat but the tide was running out and the swells were too great. We tried it but no use. [Denver] Spencer [U.S.N.] came out from the shore and we gave him his parcels. Came back to ship found people fishing.

Note: the sheepshead of which the Indian fame was brilliantly colored. Yellow tailed rock fish - grey. Green spotted rock fish - green fins and tail. Red rock fish - yellow only ..... mottled orange back. Rock sculpin ugly ...lled purple with wide fins, large mouth, sharp spines, mottled tail. Spines are poisonous. We caught a number of fish, rock sculpin, sheepshead, etc.

About 4:30 we set out for shore again. This time we were successful. The swells diminished and by turning them right we were able to make it okay.

Spencer came out in his Navy wherry 339 to help us. Harry took Jack and I ashore last and enroute a breaker caught us throwing Jack and I into the surf. I lost my tennis shoes and hat - Jack salvaged the hat. Shoes went out to sea. Harry left the boat and dived head long. Boat miraculously stayed upright. Half filled with water.

We got all our gear on the beach and moved our bed rolls to the bunk house. Air balmy and warm - clear new moon - heartfelt night. Ona fixed up some tea and soup, bread and cheese. We were ready for bed at 10.

#### Friday - April 12, 1940

Up at 6:00. Day clear and hot - no wind in morning. Temperature at 7:00, 80 degrees. Sta. Barbara and San Miguel visible to the east and n.east.

We cleaned up the bunk house and with the aid of Jim McWaters and team hauled our gear to the place. By the time we had the place mucked out and our belongings installed it was past noon. We ate lunch and then Geiger and I started east to inspect sites. We went as far as the [Coast Guard] light and then hurried home again. Found nothing of interest. Back in camp at 5:30. Wind from n.west. Clear sunset.

#### Saturday - April 13, 1940

Up at 6. Day clear, sunny no wind at this time. Today Geiger and I go to the west end of the island or rather toward that end.

Yesterday we had very little luck surfacing. Constant erosion of .... land taking place. Arroyos are deepening and the banks crumbling. One noticeable alluvial fan forming in the Big pasture east of ranch house.

Last night it was so clear we could see Anacapa Light and the light on Sta. Barbara Id. Long swells continued all day. Wind rose briskly in after noon. This morning a barge and tug are anchored off the id. It is probably Agee after wool. Wrong, it is a commercial kelp cutter barge.

Started from camp about 7:30 and stopped enroute to Springs at a small site on ridge above the

Dripping Spring near our old camp Juana Maria [SNI-136] where we were last July. There I saw a small heap of tarred pebbles about 60 in number. Going west I halted at Site #1W the large one and in a wind swept area just south of the big sand dune I found another heap of small pebbles that had once been tarred but were now blasted clean. There were 104 in this pile. We surfaced this site but found little of any consequence. We continued west surfacing all the sites to the Garden. The condition is about the same as in July. We found the usual array of shell fish hooks and blanks and a few bone implements, no chipped blades of any description.

Ate lunch at the Garden and then continued west. We surfaced sites to 12W and found more hooks and bone impl. I found one small garthy reamer and one roughly chipped blade. Returning from the last site we went over the point of the hill where the sand dunes head and on the crest found a larger site which had a number of piles of large red abalone shells piled around it. Here I found the crude chipped blade.

The common stone implements are badly battered hammer stones, a rude turtle back which has been formed by breaking a small hard pebble in two, and then roughly flaking all same one side. Sketch.

Hand choppers are also common. These are just beach pebbles with two or three large flakes struck from them. The edges seldom if ever, show signs of secondary chipping. Sketch. Lack of arrow heads may be attributed to lack of game.

The shell mounds to the west of the ranch seem to be more prolific in artifacts than those to the east. Why this is so I do not know. However, as one progresses to the west shell hooks and bone implements become more plentiful.

The flat bench land to the east is more eroded - the sites are thinner and many of them are badly cut to pieces altho. there are two or three that are fair. The last bench is cut by deep arroyos and in behind all of this bench land, back to the foot of the cliff, will be gashed and barren. In this area along the east coast the sites that were close to the ocean have long since disappeared. These may be some of the older places, abandoned perhaps because there are not so many rocky reefs along this stretch as there are to the west and north. Shell content of the mounds to the east is negligible when compared to the masses of red abalone, black abalone, mussel, etc. on the west and north sites.

#### Sunday - April 14, 1940

Weather foggy. Wind from the n.east cold. I feel stiff and sore in my legs. We rose later this morning. Loafed part of the morning. Have decided to trench Site 1W. It is closer to camp and will do as well as any for a test dig. It has been potted as have all these places but no one has apparently done any systematic trenching. I do not expect a heavy yield of artifacts.

We began a trench on the n.west crest - edge of the mound, but were not able to continue

digging. The wind increased in velocity driving the sand into our faces. We did some surface collecting of bones then returned to camp. No chance of working in this wind which howls out of the north west.

In digging on test trench, it was noticed that the surface layer of midden was about 12-15" thick, beneath that the sand was disturbed - shot thru with shell, small stones, etc. for a depth of about 2 - 2-1/2'. In some of this clean wet sand I found a complete bone tube and two or three small abalone blanks for beads. Also, I noted 2 round holes that had near filled with disturbance material that may have been the molds of butt ends of poles thrust into the sand. These were about 18" apart.

On the surface I found one obsidian point crudely made and sand blasted to a dull finish. First good chipped implement found on this trip.

#### Monday - April 15, 1940

Day overcast with fog, wind continued to blow steadily all night and all thru day velocity ranged between 22-28 miles an hour. A pale of fine yellow dust hangs over the sea which is chopped into white frothy waves. A bad day for small craft. The real storm warning for small craft was issued by Spencer.

#### Sketch of warning flag

I wrote some notes and visited with Spencer. He has been in the Navy 12 yrs and is only 26 years old - must have enlisted at 14 - under age. He could retire in 8 yrs more but he wishes to go out in 1942 and buy a chicken ranch. He sends in his meteorological reports 6 times a day. Doesn't like the Navy, but likes the berth on San Nicolas. He can save so much more. Says the wind seldom gets over 30 miles an hour. Seems to blow harder than ever.

Jack caught 3 foxes.

#### Tuesday - April 16, 1940

Sunny and windy - not quite so hard.

Visited McWaters and saw photos taken by radio man Wilson Lobdell in 1937-38 (he came June 29, 1937 and left April 1, 1938). This Lobdell did some potting around. On site back on hill near Corral Harbor he found burials accompanied by dog burial.

Jimmy McWaters has 3 points he found on sites on top of the island just south of ranch house. These are different than those from the other sand hill sites on beach. These are full scale outlines of the points they are heavy and crudely chipped probably light lance or harpoon points.

### Sketches of three points

In spite of the wind Harry and I went out to Site 1 to try to do some digging. No go; sand whipped back in our faces as fast as we dug it out. We gave it up and began surfacing again. I am satisfied that the small tarred rock piles signify house sites and near these house sites or shelters the debris is thickest and in such debris are to be found the hooks, awls, etc.

We recovered a number of hook fragments, a stone pendant or ... beads, bone implements, etc. from the site. I believe there must be some burials in it some place. We should continue work on this later.

Wind seemingly dying down late in day.

### Wednesday - April 17, 1940

Calm again this morning. Sky slightly over cast with large clouds. Sea quiet, no heavy swells. Hope the wind stays down today. I'd like to do some test digging.

I put in a test pit on the n.side of the mound and here I found on the surface indications of dog burial. I uncovered an area with the remains of about 4 dogs, buried shallowly near these dog remains was the burial of an adult Indian - 10" from head to the west was a small deposit of olivella shells partly whole and fragmentary.

### Sketch of burial

9" from the broken human burial was first dog burial. The dogs occupied an area 4' x 2' and they were just under the present surface.

Geiger found the remains of 4 or 5 dogs or foxes and young seal, a short distance north of the spot in which I was digging.

In re-surfacing the site I found a fine chipped blade, more bone implements and a complete series of small fish hooks made from the Turbine shell.

Wind began to blow about 3:30. It blew from east earlier in day but did not increase in velocity. In the evening the wind switched south and blew hard for a time but died away during the night.

### Thursday - April 18, 1940

Weather over cast at first, but sun came out. Wind from W and N. Fog well heavy off shore. Today I am 42 yrs old.

We finish excavating the human burial, collect the dogs today. Photographed and removed the 3

dog skeletons and the broken human skeleton. The cranium rested in a large, badly disintegrated abalone shell - apparently there were no offerings unless the olivella shells may be considered as such. This was a reburial probably in Indian days. Part of the bones that were upper most had been badly burned those on the ground were untouched by flame. A small stone indicated at x in sketch was at head of skeleton which was upside down. The lower jaw, intact, was upside down against the south side of skull as it lay in earth.

Vertebrae were badly scrambled some missing - some in place. Ribs also were misplaced. Both scapulae present many other bones broken.

After removing the animal and human remains we went west and surfaced other mounds as far as Corral Harbor.

I finished the color roll this morning and tried out the black and white so far it is running smoothly but I am afraid I have ruined the color film. I took a photo of Corral Harbor. Charlie Peterson grave nearby has disappeared.

We found a small mortar broken and mended with tar on a bench layer site back from Corral Harbor two or 3 hundred yards (5W?). Also bone implement, a few shell blanks and hooks, etc.

The hill side sites are on hard crusted surface but underneath is more sand.

The sand dunes crust over with the rains then the wind catches in small places and forms irregular density until finally the whole surface is broken and the entire dune is free loose sand.

On one site I saw about 5 or 6 feet of sand over an old site this site sloped toward the hill and the sand flowed over it like an alluvial fan.

Photo Site 1W. I photographed the surface and a typ. fire place as well as photo of the burial dog and human - if they are dogs.

Had a slight headache all day. In evening Ona had a birthday cake for me. The camp sang Happy Birthday like a crew of Crosby's. Tomorrow we go to east end to look at site near sand spit. The whole crowd is going.

#### Friday - April 19, 1940

Up at 6 A.M. Weather over cast no wind - foggy. Wind blew from s.west last night. Rain comes from that direction, but this is late in the season for rain. No rain.

We surfaced the last mound near e. sand spit (13E) and then began testing. Struck a burial over which was scattered the broken portions of 3 donut stones, 2 small broken steatite vessels, a small broken pestle and broken mortar with grooved ring.

Cross section sketch.

Bone impl. was 6" above bones. Broken mortar was 12" above burial, broken pestle and donut stone was 14" n.w. from mal and 8"-12" above ....

There were apparently 2 burials to the east of no. 1. Over this was small th... state of rock burned whale bone fragments all ..... earth over burials which were only 12"-14" below present surface of midden. Burials were on east side of mound on top. Two quarters of one donut stone were 10" apart when uncovered.

Above burial #1 was a scattered deposit of fish hook blanks and reamers. These were about 10" above body and scattered over a radius of about 14". A badly burned soapstone pendant was also above the body and resting almost against the neck was a small painted bone pendant. Another perforated pendant was found in loose earth above skeleton. This burial had no head and part of the cervical vertebrae rested on top of the right scapula.

The skeleton had been folded over and rested on the face head toward the south. Alongside the lower left leg was a bone whistle which was broken in removing the burial. There were scraps of burned whale bone all thru the earth above body and resting against the left pelvis were pieces of burned whale bone and flat stones under the burials were scattered fish bones and mussels and pieces of red ochre.

The bones rested against the clean sand but they were surrounded by the dark midden shot thru with bits of stone, shell, etc.

These burials were disturbed in primitive times. All thru the earth over the burials were sp.... of cremated human bones and a few burned shell beads.

Saturday - April 20, 1940

Foggy but cleared before 9.

We went immediately to the site at the east end (13E) and commenced the task of uncovering the 2 burials we found yesterday. I found one or two more shell blanks but that was all - aside from a bone whistle previously noted. When excavation was completed and no sign of head or jaw being found, I reburied all the bones in the back dirt. No sense in carrying in incomplete skeleton.

We cleaned up this set of burials and I dug further hoping to strike more. I encountered the scattered bones of a hand and part of a pelvis but no integrated bones. I found part of the small crudely made steatite vessel noted in connection with burial #1.

Apparently we were either working in a badly disturbed area from some old pot hunter's dig, or else it had been done in primitive times. I incline toward the latter theory because of the

specimens we found, and because the fragments of burial #1 and 2 were in place and articulated. Had a white man excavated the graves he would have disarranged the bones and taken the offerings.

We left the site for camp at 5 pm.

#### Sunday - April 21, 1940

Overcast - sun came out at intervals - no wind. No boat in yesterday - no mail. Went in ocean early this morning. Washed out pr. socks and shirt. Read and loafed remainder of day.

#### Monday - April 22, 1940

Up at 7. Sky overcast with clouds. Slight n.w. wind blowing. The kelp cutting barge is off the coast in front of our camp again. It was here last week.

Today we hike over the trail to south side of island. We arrived at west end of Dutch Harbor following the pasture fence.

We located the mound from which Mr. Agee took the grass textiles and were fortunate enough in recovering a number of pieces of mats, cordage, etc. One piece of 2 ply cord was 50" long when in the ground.

The grass was sandwiched in layers of sand and broken sea urchin shells, red abalone and mussel. Apparently the shells kept the soil from being consistently moist, it was aerated and thus the grass material was fairly well preserved.

A 4" to 13" crust of hardened earth served as a capping for the midden. This was yellowish sandy soil very hard and compact and broke loose in hard chunks. Immediately under this was a layer of burned shell, charcoal, ash, etc. and in the layer was found occasional bits of grass cord, textile, etc.

However, the most of the grass material came from a layer of debris from 20 - 24" below the surface of the mound. Here were the woven mats, pieces of cordage and mats of unwoven sea grass.

At a depth of 8" an abalone shell was found upside down under which were 108 small tarred pebbles for tarring grass baskets.

These small pebbles seem to be characteristic of the deposits on the islands. Previous deposits noted on San Nicolas contained 60 and 104 respectively. The mainland pebbles are larger and in less quantity where found. This discrepancy in size is probably due to the style and size of baskets made on the islands and on the mainland. Those on the islands are usually fabricated out

of sea grass or as on San Clemente from the native bunch grass. This creates a flexible basketry. Scarcity of water on the islands demanded narrow necked water bottles of a size readily carried by young and old. Small pebbles were necessary to go into the necks of these bottles. Such grass bottles often hardened into lopsided shapes.

The site from which the grass textiles were recovered is located about 100 yds east of the only fence line that crosses the island from north to south [SNI-51]. It is on a small knoll back from the beach at the west end of Dutch Harbor on the south side of San Nicolas Id.

A trifle east of this site is Site #2 [SNI-134]. It seems to be similar in composition to Site #1 but we did not examine it today.

Aside from the grass mats, skirts etc. there were bunches of unworked grass covering sections of the debris. Apparently all of the mound is a midden trash heap and the grass artifacts are those discarded. If the layers represent house floors then there is little indication of such a residence. The debris is pure midden. The abalone is red abalone and much of it is burned to flakes. The sea urchins seem not to have been cooked. The spines remain purple, the shell is greenish-yellow as seen on the beach in old husks of the animal. However, most of these are broken in to fragments.

Aside from the sea urchins, abalone and mussel, there were few other shells. Some sea otter bones and bird bones were encountered.

#### Section of midden

#### Tuesday - April 23, 1940

Windy and cloudy - wind N.N.W. Stayed in and arranged notes - packed the material and read.

The Timo was sighted off shore just before 12 but it was not in before 12:30. One boat landed bringing mail, bread and fresh vegetables. Waves running high. Wind strong - and cold but in we went to get boat and re-launch it.

#### Wednesday - April 24, 1940

Decided to go over hill to Dutch Harbor again. Weather windy, sky overcast with clouds.

The route we followed was along the east side of the west fence of the pasture until we reached the open plateau which is cut by deep arroyos, here we have to dip in and out. The "roughs" are the damndest mess of canyons and ridges; barren, steep. It is 800 feet from crest to beach. We climbed it on the 22nd from the beach in 40 minutes.

We began digging on the site about 9:00. Geo. K. came over later and stayed with Harry and I

the rest of the day. Leo collected down the coast. We dug a space about 10' wide 12' long and ranging in depth from 2'-3'.

The site is characterized by about four traceable occupation levels. Overlying the entire site is a compact stratum of hard yellow sand in which is mixed shell and stone of the last occupation. In some spots erosion has begun and the debris is on the surface. At other points the last occupational level is covered by the crust of sand and plants.

This level is characteristic of all the levels. It is composed of sea urchin shells and spines, abalone, shell, charcoal, fish bones and spines, mussel shell, some mammal and bird bones. This is a loose mixture and is quite fresh and clean when exposed. The sea urchin shells seemingly act as air pockets and with the numerous large red and yellow abalone form a cushion for the lesser debris. The sea urchin spines are still purple and these are in a compact yet loose flowing mass. Added to the mixture is the sea grass (eel grass) it is tan when damp, white when bleached. Apparently any of the short lengths of cordage and some of the mat and skirt fragments were exposed on the trash heap before being covered by the other debris and sand. These are bleached white and offer a strange contrast to the other pieces that were covered with debris before they had an opportunity to become bleached.

Cross-section drawing

Plan view drawing

..... about 45' x 6' x 2-1/2' deep  
We trenched 12' x 10' x 3'

Geo. Knowlton and Frank Bottles - 230 Western and Long Beach.

A fishermen brot in blanks, mortar and 3 pestles to dig just as we were leaving. Found them beyond rookery up on ridge about 1 mile east of end of id.

Between the layers of shell and sea urchin, fish bones, etc. are thin compact layers of the yellow beach sand, damp and stiff. These strata contain occupational debris to a certain extent.

..... the mats were found resting on top of the debris and covered immediately by the damp sand, they were in better condition in so far as retaining shape and weave were concerned but decidedly more fragile and more likely to break as one brushed them.

Aside from the woven articles the Indians had used great quantities of unworked grass, apparently some of the grass had served as a rude covering for the floor and the little shelters which were about 6' dia. according to Nidever.

The probable source of the eel grass is the rocky reef that juts out at the west end of Dutch Harbor. The grass could be gathered at low tide, grass of the same sort is found along the rocks at low tide on the beach at Ranch House Landing.

East of Site #1 were two other sites [SNI-134 and SNI-64(?)] - these were badly eroded and the content of them consisted principally of abalone and mussel shells. I test pitted then in one or two places and found there was no sea grass or sea urchin deposits.

The descent to the Dutch Harbor site from the rim was via a steep trail made by the sheep the "four legged Locusts" of San Nicolas. This trail follows the fence line which continues clear to the rocky head land forming the western end of the harbor. The trail follows the ridge and is decidedly rocky and barren. The strata are sedimentary - sandy shale turning yellow in color with darker mineralized layers here and there.

This portion of the island is known as the roughs and it is channeled with deep canyons which are dry and rocky. There is scant vegetation on the ridges and even at this season of the year when other portions of the island are green - the roughs are bleak and dry. Here and there are a few stray opuntia broad leaved cacti but no shrubs.

From the rim its roughly 800 feet above the beach. However, the first day we hauled up after work we made it in 40 minutes - resting enroute. Today we made it in 26 minutes - also resting at intervals. The distance is not so great but the haul is decidedly steep and footing bad.

The top of the island SE of the ranch house is rolling plateau cut by arroyos on the north side. The drainage across the top of the id. is toward the north side altho the south side is badly cut to pieces but on the side only. The arroyos cutting the plateau begin near the south side and flow north.

Apparently the arroyos on the plateau are the results of erosion along the lines of old sheep trails. This is evident when one follows the old trails and find them dissolving into small arroyos which in time become deep canyons. In some of these arroyos grow the tall bushy plants, the baccharus - which must have been quite common during primitive days. Another low growing bush which has brittle thorny branches is the lycium.

Both of these shrubs were undoubtedly fire wood supplies for the Indians. The charcoal in the middens is noted as being branches of small diameter. Now and then one finds heavier pieces of charcoal with definite tree rings. Apparently these were pieces of drift wood. Nidever spoke of seeing a piece of drift wood dropped by Juana Maria in route from the beach to her hut.

The plateau of the island commands a fine view of the ocean in all directions and within 30 minutes observation can be made to N. S. and East from the region s. of the present ranch house.

The rolling country is now grass covered except in spots where there are great barren stretches toward the west end. Here and there one sees the small rock piles where individual houses stood. Not much midden, but there are stone chips and some shell. Oddly enough at times when the wind whips strongly along the north side there is an appreciable slackening of the current in the plateau. Hence, in clear weather the top at the eastern end of the island was relatively pleasant. There are two shell mounds on top of the hill about 1/4 - 1/2 mile from the head of the horse trail

and just to the N.W. of the first fence line. We did not surface either of these.

On clear days and even on rainy days when the haze over the ocean clears away, one sees the island of Sta. Barbara quite plainly looming on the eastern horizon while the bulk of Santa Cruz and San Miguel, the latter less plainly visible, are seen to the N. and N.west. One might readily imagine lone canoes bobbing about on the immense plain of sea driving from Sta. Barbara toward the island from the east and cutting in from the other islands on N. and N.west.

While we were digging this a.m. 2 fishermen: George Knowlton who has been fishing around the islands about 20 yrs, and a young U.C.L.A. Junior - Francis Bottles, came up from the east end. They are out looking for sharks to get the livers for vitamin medicine. These boys are intelligent, nice ..... They stayed around chumming awhile then went up toward the west end. About 5 o'clock they returned bringing some shell blanks, a small mortar, an arrowhead and several pestles. Knowlton has promised to come in and give the Museum a number of arrow heads he has picked up on the surface of San Miguel. He also has a large mortar cached out on San Miguel. He knows Sanger and has no use for his pot hunting proclivities. Knowlton knows the order against digging on the islands without permit - so much he pretty well.....

Just as we were leaving the site I saw at the north end of the ridge a cross section of the site exposed with more grass in the midden. This area is about 60' n. of the area where we were digging. I believe that it would pay to begin at this point and dig south, peeling the site. More textiles would be recovered.

So far Kroeber has been refuted on the following points:  
Basketry is definitely island material - mostly sea grass.  
Cremation was practiced on this island and on San Clemente to a certain extent.

It begins to appear that culturally these islands are more closely affiliated with the Canalino-Gabrielino group than with the Shoshonean groups further south. Aside from the sporadic traces of cremation which are defacto the other culture, traits are definitely allied to the Chumash-Gabrielino rather than the Shoshonean. Both surface and midden excavated data have yielded evidence of these contacts.

#### Thursday - April 25, 1940

Weather bright early in morning but it began raining shortly after noon and showers persisted all the rest of the day and at night fall it was raining heavily. We stayed in camp and packed specimens.

#### Friday - April 26, 1940

Weather cloudy - sun out part of time, wind from s. shifting now and then to N.N.W. Heavy rain squalls pass over id. S. to N.

The combers are pounding in high. The rain squalls drift across the ocean like rain clouds across the desert of N.W. Ariz. Dark grey blue masses of clouds hug the N. horizon and against these back drops the gulls look like white pieces of paper blowing out to sea. Beautiful sight, sea blue green - the long masses of amber kelp and storm clouds overhead suddenly out to sea toward Sta. B and mainland. I finished packing grass material today.

Saturday - April 27, 1940

Rain over - some clouds - high wind from N.W. white caps on ocean. Sea running high. We sighted the Velero III ploughing toward the island about 8 am. She hove to off the island but didn't lower a boat. Geo. K. went to West end (garden).

Harry and I packed our material and were virtually ready to roll before breakfast.

Sunday - April 28, 1940

Sunny and calm on ocean. Velero pulled out yesterday a.m. Returned over horizon about 7 this morning. On board at 10:50.

Obtained the following distances between islands from chart in wheel house by .....

Sta Barbara Id. - 25-1/2 mainland miles to Ranch House Landing.

San Nicolas to Santa Rosa Bechers Bay - 50 miles.

Five miles between Sta Cruz and Sta Rosa Skunk pt to shore near Morse pt. on St. Cruz on west end.

Sta B to west end Catalina about 21 mainland miles.

We had an uneventful trip in. Weather calmed down as we left Channel. Day ideal water blue and white ..... yachts homing for regatta at Sta. Catalina. We ..... break water in afternoon passing light house on end of breakwater at 4 p.m.

Journal of Trip to San Nicolas Id.  
Nov. 23 - Dec. 12, 1940

Personnel:

Jack von Blocker and wife Ona  
Chris Henne  
George Kanakoff  
Marion Hollenbach  
Howard Keller  
John Shrader  
Arthur Woodward

Saturday - November 23, 1940

Left the dock at 8:45. Weather crisp and clear - was down to 38° around 6 AM. No wind - sea calm relatively calm dark water.

Enroute I took a shot of Pt. Fermin [3], one of the group on deck [2], a couple of shots of porpoise and one of the air plane carrier enroute to the harbor [5]. Spoiled one film and took a shot of the Velero as it lay at the dock [1].

Had a full house this trip. Clements of USC was aboard to get sedimentary soundings. Francis Elmore was on board, a Mr. Fletcher, Irish Co-pilot of Capt. Hancock's air plane was also on the ship. He was a flyer in the last war. Dunkle came along to be dropped at Sta. Barbara to look after some instruments on that Id.

Anchored off Dutch Harbor at 3 p.m. Sea calm. Sunny. We were ashore before dark and had supper on the beach. Sea calm, few breakers - we unloaded in jig time and had no accidents.

Camp at Dutch Harbor, S.N. Id.

Sunday - November 24, 1940

Up at dawn - the Velero III lies offshore in a calm sea. We have a few sporting sea lions with us. Began erecting camp after breakfast. Rather it was before breakfast. Pitched tents inside and out of the fence. Later in the day Marion, John and Howard went with me to inspect the site [SNI-51]. It is the same as we left it last April. More grass in evidence. Tomorrow we begin staking it out.

Later in the afternoon Marion and I went down the coast toward the east end to look for other sites, there are several scattered camp or fishing sites along the shore just back of the high tide line on the low bluffs. Most of these are badly eroded. One site near the far point east of the east point of Dutch Harbor is a good looking site. Older deposits overlaid with later ones showing grass in them. We may test this site before we leave. Found some whole mats and brot back one

large and several small ones.

#### Monday - November 25, 1940

Up a bit later this morning. Ona's alarm clock failed to go off. Today we begin operations.

Marion and I laid off the site in 4 ft squares beginning at N.E. end. This was a pun section of site and yielded very little, a few fragments of cordage, an unfinished donut stone, and Marion's pendant - the one I made and planted on trip. She dug too much today. Weather fine, but windy. Wind blows nearly night and day from the N.West. Breakers higher than usual.

#### Tuesday - November 26, 1940

We were on the dig by 8:00. Nothing of decided importance. John uncovered a large piece of grass matting or skirt 2'8" x 2'10" in fair condition. I photographed it in color [33]. Howard had a bad cold and will have to lay off digging until he gets better.

Marion did not come on dig after lunch. Worn out from day before. She found a fragment of grass mat or skirt, more cordage.

Went in swimming late in afternoon. Weather fine but windy. Tide came up high on beach early dawn, we had to move our water barrels. The weather never gets too cold here - not as cold as on mainland.

Jack took 8 foxes today. Sunday M and I saw a small one as he walked down the beach. It was unafraid and moved off slowly pausing to dig here and there for beetles or lizards.

#### Wednesday - November 27, 1940

Up before the sun. Waves pounding high and tide coming up. Tomorrow it will be a 7 ft. tide, higher than ever. Chris found some good matting fragments yesterday on the small eroded mounds just west of camp. We will strip those patches before we leave here.

Last night I went over to the point of rocks forming the west end of Dutch Harbor. Black abalone and mussels are plentiful. In the dunes near the rocks are a few isolated camp sites, maybe houses. The whale bone remnants of one are still plainly visible. The waters off this point are the favorite sporting grounds of some sea lions. We see them diving and playing out there nearly every day.

#### Thursday - November 28, 1940

Thanksgiving Day B.R. - Before Roosevelt

Today we tested the small mounds on the rear of Chris's tent [SNI-50 or 133]. One piece of matting from a site high up on the hill. In the afternoon I went with Howard down to the rocky ledge forming the west arm of Dutch Harbor. Here are mussel beds that literally cover the rocks; hundreds of mussels. I photographed them in color [35, 36], also took a shot of some abalone clinging to the rocks [37]. Gathered some long sea grass and will dry it.

We cleaned and dried the grass matting and the small basket. The latter had some long strands of material wadded inside - material ready to use. I also photographed the site looking toward the s.east from hill n of camp. Photographed the basket and mat. Took 2 shots of a fox held by Jack [38,39].

We gathered some large mussels to have a stew. I think we should have collected smaller ones. The Indians gathered very few large mussel shells. Went in bathing.

Friday - November 29, 1940

We went east along the beach this morning - John, Marion and I. We inspected two or three sites, one just west of the light and one just east of the light, at east end of Dutch Harbor. I photographed Dutch Harbor - took 2 views looking n.west [17,18] - also took a shot of the isolated shell mound east of the light. John and Marion on top of it.

We dug in mound in forenoon and nothing exciting. In the afternoon we dug in mound again.

Saturday - November 30, 1940

Up at dawn - excavated site again today. Foggy last night, tents oozed moisture. We found a few fragments of mat, more cordage. Howard found a small cache of fish hook blanks. We took John's mat out, moistened it, and rolled it up, then unrolled it.

Ash and shell lenses, running true to form, overlay of sand deeper in some spots than in others. George Kanakoff spent the night at the ranch (we suppose). He didn't turn up for supper.

Sunday - December 1, 1940

Foggy last night. However, by 5 am fog had drifted out to sea. Breakfast over by 7:00. We head north along the beach today for the west end of island to plot in sites and see Juana Maria's house site.

Drift wood log on beach west of camp about 1 mile. Saw a redwood tree trunk recorded 47" dia. Near mouth of Big Ravine, a white alder tree trunk 36' long 6-10" dia on beach, another pine log

15' dia. 30 ft. long recorded near mouth of Eagle Canon. Further west near a sea lion rookery a pine log 20" dia and 12' long. Another pine 8' long 9" dia. Trunk 40-1/2' pinus perhaps 3' diameter had been in forest fire and burned.

Saw several small heaps of pebbles on middens from which tar had been sand blown. These were usual size, however, on crest of one midden so. of the first sea lion rookery, was a heap of about 30 pebbles about 2" long and 1" wide.

Found a mortar in the making, a large rounded boulder 12-1/2" high and about 10" dia., neck partially pecked. Sketch of mortar.

Sites extend all the way along coast west to the end of the island.

At Juana Maria's site we photographed the hut site before and after restoration [64,65]. I found a chert knife blade almost inside the hut ring. We also found a number of shell fish hook blanks. I found a queer steatite bead.

We found the misplaced burial enroute to West End. We also found about 60 blanks for fish hooks near a house site not far from the misplaced burial.

Near the latter place on shelving rocks and sandy slope was a sea lion rookery. Here I obtained some action shots of sea lions [43,44,45]. We found 3 sea elephant cows asleep, separate from the other animals. They woke up as we surrounded them. One, a calf, was completely surrounded and we took a number of photographs of it [46-50]. Jack says this is the first record of sea elephants on San Nicolas Id.

Later we visited the huge sea lion and seal rookery near Juana Maria's hut site on West end. These are on the craggy beaches just west and s.west of the ridge upon which the house is located. Here we saw another cow sea elephant. These animals have a curving proboscis and are a golden brown in color. They cannot use their rear flippers as the sea lions do - and in course ..... of which they hitch along on their bellies like a snake. When aroused they open their mouths and snort. They have a powerful set of teeth and grab and hang on to anything when angry.

There is a seepage of fresh water from the rocks in the bank at the rookery.

We reenacted the capture of Juana Maria. Marion sat inside the improvised whale bone shelter facing the east while the boys came up in line in front of her [66,67].

The fog drove in during the day crawling out of the north and partially obscuring the shore line. It appeared and disappeared a couple of times. We started home rather late and arrived after dark, about 7 pm. A sliver of moon helped some in guiding us along the beach. We ate and rolled in - dog tired.

Monday - December 2, 1940

Foggy early this morning around sunrise but it went to sea and didn't return until about 12 noon. We, John, Howard and myself dug on the site. Marion stayed in camp cataloging specimens. We found a number of bone implements yesterday.

Today I found a fair sized fragment of mat and a hunk of finely twisted cord. Unfortunately it was so rotten it didn't hold together as it should, but enough remains to indicate what it was. This was in 23S/6W. Near this were 4 bone implements, and 2 of the pendant abalone rim implements. At first I thought these might be accidental but now I am convinced they were used for some purpose or other. Also found 2 perforated fish hook blanks and another small fragment of matting. We have 7 more active days on the island. We pack on the 10th and get ready to pull out on the 11th.

So far we have checked sites all along the south side west of Dutch Harbor. The sites near the Harbor are scattered, isolated and badly eroded ones until the mouth of Eagle Creek is reached. West of the creek the sites increase in number and in size. They assume the size and proportion of those on the north side west of Ranch House Landing and continue in an almost unbroken series clear to the west end. Hence we may safely say that the bulk of the population lived on the west end of the island from about half way on the south around the western tip and half way down the north side.

East of Dutch Harbor there are several sites similar in nature to those near the Harbor to the west - small, badly eroded ones that may have been larger in times past. These are slightly different in character in that they seem older, fewer animal bones being seen.

Predominate food stuffs on all sites - abalone (green, black and red), mussels, sea urchins, small turbine shells and on north west end, giant chiton piles appear in quantity at several places.

Found a netting needle of bird bone at 25S/6W at 5" below surface. A small fish hook at 27" below surface in 24S/6W.

Tuesday - December 3, 1940

Bright sunny day. No fog last night.

Began operations on site around 8 a.m. At depth of 14" in 25S/6W I found a cluster of 41 tarred pebbles in the yellow earth mixed with crushed sea urchin spines, shells.

Later in the day I uncovered a fragment of matting and cordage. In the afternoon I shifted to the east side of the mound where I found 2 fish hooks and 2 fragments of matting. Tested on the level just at the east base of the mound where the sand is deep. Some midden there but no artifacts. Howard found a fair sized piece of matting.

The day was exceptionally fine and warm. We went in the surf around 2 p.m. Cold at first but it gets warmer as one stays in longer. The sea grass I gathered the other afternoon is almost dry. Now and then we find small fragments of grass with the roots attached - no doubt as to the kind of grass. I found the broken remnants of a tarred water bottle and Marion laid a primary coating of latex in it this evening. So far we have had fair luck, the cordage and matting the most plentiful. Wish we could get a complete grass skirt. The mat 2'10" x 2'8" is the largest item so far. Don't know whether we can pack it or not; and keep it from going to pieces.

Marion catalogued all day and packed specimens collected day before yesterday on the hike. Thursday we go over the hill to the north side of the island. I want to complete the series of slides with views of that portion of the island. On Sunday we will go to the east end and probably come back across the plateau.

#### Wednesday - December 4, 1940

In the a.m. resumed digging on east slope of midden. Found some cordage and a fish hook reamer. In afternoon resumed digging on top of mound and at 27S/2W I found the remnants of several grass skirts and 2 fish hooks, the latter broken and the former in bad condition. Also found one of the peculiar abalone implements in the dig. At this point the grass material found at the 18" level seems prolific but no real excellent pieces have turned up as yet.

I found 2 fish hooks near the tarred basket yesterday. The basketry was coated with latex and then removed. At a depth of 2' in 27S/2W I found a worked piece of steatite; first item of this kind found in the midden.

#### Thursday - December 5, 1940

Foggy. Out to visit other side of Id. and go to garden. Left at 7:00 arrived at ranch at 9:00 and garden at 12:30.

Found many surface items including fish hooks, bone impl., etc. Found 140 tarred pebbles in one heap. These were small, found 21 large pebbles in heap, these are from 1-1/2 to 2" long and 1" dia.

San Nicolas Camp Zorro

#### Friday - December 6, 1940

Resumed the dig today.

At 28S/6W at depth of 1' in top light midden I found a large ceremonial steatite donut stone notably ornamented with scratches. Stone is 5" dia. Along same line at depth of 6" (28S/5W) I found a small fish hook. At 28S/5W I also found a bone barb, a bone implement and a shell

blank. At 28S/4W I found quantities of cordage and fragments of mats and skirts at depths varying from 3" to 18".

Stayed on the mound all day; foggy last nite.

Camp Zorro, Sn. Nicolas Id.  
Saturday - December 7, 1940

Very foggy and disagreeable today. Wind from N.N.W. and drives the fog down the island. The surf has been pounding in these last two or three days without let up. Hope both fog and surf subside by Wednesday. This is real winter weather.

We have tested and trenched most of the mound. The results are visible in an accumulation of specimens. Apparently there was very little difference in the cultural details of the various periods of occupancy.

The grass material when found within the first 12" - 18" is in fair condition - better when found with in 12" and under 6" but when it is found in the lower strata the earth is too hard and too wet and the grass disintegrates.

There are lenses of fire burned abalone, mussel and sea urchin shell which, although quite thick in places, never yield anything. The last 6" layer - that which begins at the grass roots or under the first layer of yellow sand is usually most productive. Here are found the best cords, the best hooks, bone implements, etc. Now and then hearths are encountered on the various levels - these are marked by small depressions full with ashes, fish bones, etc. Stones are sometimes used to house the fire but many times the fire places are indicated only by the patches of fire burned earth.

#### Grass bunches

One thing has been particularly noticeable in this mound - the prevalence of small bunches of sea grass, usually under inverted abalone shells. It is difficult to state the precise nature of this grass. Almost all of them have one or two bits of loosely woven grass protruding from the mass, yet there is no formation visible in the grass itself. Here and there the grass roots are seen which look at first glance like small pieces of woven stuff. The quantity of cordage in the debris is amazing. These are usually short pieces of all sizes and pop out like angle worms. The one mass of cords I found indicate the apparent abundance of this material in primitive times. The unfinished basket suggests the same inverted system of weaving as that done among the Attu on the Alaskan coast.

No chipped blades were found in the entire excavation. In fact chipped points of any description are scarce on these sites. Broken stones and hammer stones are found by the score. The absence of pestles is also quite noticeable - only one being found in the debris and no mortars. Hence was this site abandoned some time previous to historic period? Were these sites on the south

side occupied intermittently while those on the west and north were the permanent sites? Lack of heavy mortars, blades, burials, etc. would seem to indicate this. Absence of fresh water may have had some influence on this altho. the creek in Eagle Canyon is not far distant.

Camp Zorro

Sunday - December 8, 1940

Foggy last night - cold and disagreeable. Fog lifted from surface this a.m. and watery sun did its best but the cold N.N.W. wind blew down. We go to East End to tackle some of the sites there. Test them out today and tomorrow.

#### Sketch map

We walked to the sand spit. Last good sites are scattered all along the shore beginning at the rough country just west of the sand spit on so. s.west of the spit. Here are several sandy beaches with old eroded bench lands extending back to the face of the eroded cliffs and hills. On these hummocks are eroded sites some of which are undoubtedly worth trenching. These are of the same type as the Dutch Harbor Site #1.

The crescent shaped beach is flanked on either end by rocky points. Here were the food supplies. Water may be temporary during rainy season - possible correlation between animal and bird bones and season's when the mounds were occupied may be obtained by a study of the ages of the birds and mammals represented.

Erosion of this south side seems to be due almost entirely to water action whereas the north and west sides are cut to pieces by wind and water. This slow erosion has kept the mounds here more intact. The sand has solidified to a greater degree than the sand on the west end and on north side in general. Hence the top crust becomes more difficult to remove and only by water channeling are the mounds whittled down.

We have less winds on these sites. Our camp at Dutch Harbor was in the protection of the low mounded hills - the fog sand drifted over us at a rapid rate - blown by the wind, yet we did not feel the blast.

We returned along the beach and arrived at camp after dark. A beautiful sunset, the waves breaking against the sun were crested with molten glass that shattered into crystal sherds and dissolved in a welter of spume. The sun tract along the water filmed sand shown golden and there was erased by the creeping fringes of foam.

Monday - December 9, 1940

Sky overcast this a.m. We packed the grass material and have everything practically under control. I believe we have quite a representative collection of weaves - all relatively simple but

some variation has been achieved by the use of fine cords spacing of the larger twined material, etc.

No chipped blades from this site. Fishhooks seem to be mostly red abalone altho several of the moon shell have turned up.

Rain fell this p.m. Chris and Marion went for a hike down the beach seeking the canyon with the tree. I stayed in camp. A whale appeared off shore about noon. Jack and Ona had seen this huge monster and a smaller one playing further up. We fired at it with Jack's 25-35 but shots all fell short.

Jack also reported seeing 2 sea otter near shore - a huge shark and porpoise. Hope the sea otters are here. Tomorrow we pack our stuff and make ready for the Velero III when she comes in Wed. morning, I hope.

This is probably our last trip to San Nicolas for some time. Next time I'd like to camp on the west end and prospect those mounds but Santa Rosa is more important - so is San Miguel.

Camp Zorro, Sn. Nicolas Id.  
Tuesday - December 10, 1940

Sky overcast at dawn. Sun came out later in day. Spent the day packing specimens. Nothing else to do making ready to break camp tomorrow. Saw whales yesterday flouling off shore.

We went swimming this p.m. Water fine. The beach here is a bit deep but water is shallow. Sea has been fairly calm. Hope it is as calm tomorrow. I finished my 4th roll of color film this afternoon - took a shot of M's footprints to go with the Juana Maria story. Also took a shot of camp. Hope I've given all my pictures correct time. So far everything has worked out fairly well.

The site is finished or at least fairly well covered. We trenched it in the rear - s.side and then cut in all along the sides removing the midden down to the clean yellow sand. Most of the best objects occur just under the surface.

Howard worked these past two days at the eastern end of the base line and about 12 ft from the east end of the line he found a donut stone, matting, a fine tarred whale bone implement with imprint of wood handle. We have found a number of these in this midden. I do not know what they were used for. Howard worked on the bottom of the deposit 20" below the surface. He found the donut stone about 8' s. of the base line and 32' e. at depth of about 3".

The deposit varies in intensity, as is natural. Near the apex of the mound in the central section toward the s. end we find several thin layers of charcoal, shell, etc. alternating with yellowish sand shot thru with flakes of bone, grass, etc. Now and then huge lenses 3'-4' in diameter and 6"-12" thick composed of burned abalone, mussel and sea urchin shells are found. Again the

layers of shell and sea urchin spines and hooks are clean and unburned - loose and dry. As previously noted these layers seem to act as insulation against moisture.

Howard found at the 20" level a huge abalone shell under which were the bones of 3 or 4 sea otter pups. Also a decayed piece of matting. This was about 35' e. 2' s. of the main base line.

Camp Zorro

Wednesday - December 11, 1940

Up before dawn, camp ready to be broken - left tents up expecting Velero in. The people from the ranch came over in forenoon and waited. Mrs. Thrasher wants to go back with us. However, she decided not to carry over night and so returned. Shortly after they left the Velero came in sight. We struck camp and cleared the last boat about 4 p.m. Water was getting cold. Had trouble shoving boats off - beach has sanded in with the constant pounding of the surf. Tonite we stay on board.

On board Velero III

Thursday - December 12, 1940

We stayed off shore until almost noon waiting for the people from the ranch to put in their appearance. Capt. Hancock dredged and waited - no sign of them so we put about and headed for shore.

Glad this trip is about over. Sun dry complications have set in that are disappointing, nothing can be done about it. We sighted a large school of porpoises in the channel. They raced the usual weaving about the prow like alive grey torpedoes. I took a number of shots but don't think I got any thing.

We docked at about the usual time. Parker had been down and had returned. We ate on board - Marion, Barbara, Howard and myself. Barbara J.... took Marion, Howard and I to Barker's boarding house on Figueroa where I got my own car.

Another trip done - one I shall long remember. More than ever I realize San Nicolas Id. is a desolate, dreary place slightly cursed. I shall always dread going back to it.