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THE SPANISH SETTLEMENT AT NOOTKA

After Captain Cook's third voyage maritime traders began to resort to this coast lured by the stories of its illimitable wealth in furs and skins. Spain looked with jealous eye upon this trade, which, besides enriching other countries to her detriment, was regarded as an infringement of her territory and a trespass upon her closed sea—the immense Pacific ocean. This lay at the root of the struggle between Britain and Spain, which is known as the Nootka dispute.

To assert her rights and to maintain her position it was determined to found a Spanish settlement at Nootka Sound. Accordingly, in the spring of 1789, two vessels were dispatched, from San Blas in Mexico, with colonists for this proposed venture. Shortly after their arrival some English vessels from China, operated by John Meares, a lieutenant of the Royal Navy, were seized and their crews imprisoned. This brought the relative claims of Great Britain and Spain on the coast into conflict. During the early summer the Spaniards built upon the highest point of the island dominating Friendly Cove, a fort mounting ten cannon and near by a barracks for the garrison.

On the semi-circular shore of Friendly Cove, with its wide stretch of white sea-sand, Maquinna, the famous chief of Nootka, had his summer village. From pre-historic days the spot had been a village site. It combined proximity to the fishing grounds, safety for canoes, and abundance of fresh water. But the uncivilized must make room for the civilized. The site of the Indian village was also convenient for the Spaniards. Maquinna and his subjects were, therefore, forced to abandon their old homes and select a new locality some five or six miles farther up the sound. With great sorrow, as Maquinna told Jewitt, they found themselves compelled at the behest of a stranger

to quit the home of their forefathers. Except from the sentimental point of view this was not a serious matter, for they were in the habit of regularly changing their homes at least twice a year. On such occasions everything was removed except the upright posts which formed the skeleton of the building. In their stead, though but slowly, now rose the Spanish village. By the end of July only three houses had been built—a workshop, a bakery, and a lodging house. It must be confessed that in external appearance and in the regularity of its laying out the new village had very little to boast of over the efforts of the untutored savage.

In this spot, so wild and new, so far from any other Spanish settlement, a ceremony dazzling with all the pomp of circumstance so dear to the Castilian heart, occurred in June, 1789. It was the formal taking of possession, an empty ceremony frequently performed, upon which Spain greatly relied as placing her ownership beyond dispute. In the archives the instrument of possession, a long, very formal, and high-sounding document, is preserved. As it gives a complete description of this mediæval custom, the following translation may prove of interest:

In the Name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, One True God in three Distinct Persons, who is the creative principle and creator of all things, without whom nothing good can be instituted, achieved or preserved—and Whereas the principle of everything good must be in God—and therefore it behooves us to begin it in God—for the glory and honour of HIS MOST HOLY NAME.

Therefore Know All Men To Whom these presents and the present Chart of Possession shall come that: Today being Wednesday the 24th day of June 1789 on the arrival of the Frigate named "Nuestra Senora del Rosario" (Alias "La Princessa"), together with the packet boat "San Carlos el Filipino" both belonging to His Most Mighty Illustrious and Catholic Majesty Carlos the Third, King of Castile, of Leon, of Aragon, of all the Sicilies, of Jerusalem, of Navarra, of Granada, of Toledo, of Valencia, of Galicia, of Majorea, of Seville, of Sardinia, of Corsica, of Cordova, of Murcia Jaen, of the Algarves, of Algeciras, of Gibraltar, of the Canary Islands, of the Eastern Indies and Western Islands, and of the (foreshore) first land "Y Tierra prime del Mar Oceano" in the Oceanic Sea, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Bologna, of Brabant, and Milan, Count of Aspurg, Flanders, Tyrol, and Barcelona, Lord of Biscay and Molina, The said frigate and packet-boat, by Command of His Excellency Don Manuel Antonio Florez Maldonado Martinez de Angul y Bodquin, of Knight of the Order of Calatrava, Commander of Nolino and Laguna Rota, Lieutenant General of the Royal Armada, Viceroy and Captain General of New-Spain, President of the Royal Audiencia, and Sub-Delegate General of Corres in the said Kingdom, Having sailed from the port of San Blas, on the Southern Sea, in the Government of the Viceroy, aforesaid, on

the 17th day of February in the same year, for the purpose of discovery along the coast from Monterey northwards. This expedition being under the command-in-chief of Don Estevan Jose Martinez, Ensign of Marine, in the Royal Armada; and said expedition being anchored in the port of Santa Cruz, one of the numerous harbors contained in the Bay of San Lorenzo de Nuca, with the aforesaid frigate of his command and the packet-boat of his following. Said Commander-in-Chief having disembarked with the officers of both ships, with the troops, and a number of the sailors, together with the Fathers Chaplains Don José Lopez de Nava, and Don José Maria Diaz and the four Missionaries of the Order of San Francis of the Apostolic College of San Fernando de Mexico, Brother Severo Patero, (President) Brother Lorenzo Lacies, Brother José Espi, and Brother Francisco Sanchez—The said Commander drew out a cross, which he worshipped devoutly on his knees, together with all those who accompanied him:—then the Chaplains and Friars sang “Te Deum Laudamus”—and the canticle having been concluded the Commander said in a loud voice: “In the name of His Majesty the King Don Carlos the III^d—Our Sovereign whom may God keep many years, with an increase of our Dominions, and Kingdoms,—for the service of God, and for the good and prosperity of his vassals, and for the interests of the mighty lords the kings, his heirs and successors in the future as his commander of these ships, and by virtue of the orders and instructions which were given to me in his royal name, by the aforesaid His Excellency the Viceroy of New-Spain, I take, and I have taken, I seize, and I have seized possession of this soil, where I have at present disembarked which had been formerly discovered by us, in the year 1774—and once more, on the present day,—for all time to come, in the said Royal Name, and in the name of the Royal Crown of Castile and Leon, as aforesaid—As if it was my own thing, which it is, and shall be and, which really belongs to the King aforesaid, by reason of the donation and the bull “Expedio Motu Proprio” of our Most Holy Father Alexander VI. Pontiff of Rome, by which he donated to Most High and Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand V and Isabel his spouse, Kings of Castile and Leon, of illustrious memory, and to their successors, and heirs—one-half the world—by deed made at Rome on the 4th of May in the year 1493—by virtue of which these present lands belong to the said Royal Crown of Castile and Leon, and as such I take, and I have taken possession of these lands aforesaid, and the adjoining districts, seas, rivers, ports, bays, gulfs, archipelagos, and this Port of Santa Cruz, in the island named by Martinez—among the many which are enclosed in the Bay of San Lorenzo de Nuca,—which bay is situated in latitude North 49° 33’ and longitude 20° 18’—West of the meridian of Sn Blas where I am at present anchored with the said frigate and packet-boat of my command, and I place them, and they shall be placed under the dominion, and power of the said Royal Crown of Castile and Leon, as aforesaid, and as if it was my own property, which it is.”—And as a sign of such possession he drew his sword which had hung by his side, and with it he counted the trees, the branches, and the lands, he disturbed the stones on the beach and in

the fields without encountering any opposition, asking those presents to be witnesses of these facts, and to me *Rafaël de Canizares*, who am the Notary appointed to this expedition by the Commander-in-Chief he ordered me to relate the facts in due form, as a public testimony. thereof.—Then taking a large cross on his shoulders, and the crews of both ships having been formed in marching column, armed with guns and other weapons, the procession marched out, the Chaplains and Friars chanting the Litany of "Rogation"—the whole troupe responding—and the procession having halted, the Commander planted the cross in the ground, and made a heap of stones at the foot thereof—as a sign and in memory of the taking of possession in the name of His Catholic Majesty *Carlos III.* King of all Spain (whom God keep)—of all these lands and neighbouring districts discovered, continuous and contiguous—and gave the name of "*Santa Cruz*" to this port, as has been said—And when the cross was planted, they worshipped it once more, and all prayed, demanding in supplication from our Lord, *Jesus Christ*, that He should accept their offering, because everything had been done for the glory and honour of his Holy Name, and in order to exalt, and enrich our holy catholic faith—and to introduce the word of the holy Gospel among these savage nations, which until the present time had been kept in ignorance of the true knowledge and doctrine,—which will guard them and deliver them from the snares and perils of the Demon and from the blindness in which they have lived,—for the salvation of their souls.—after which the chaplains and friars began chanting the Hymn "*Vexilla Regis.*"—Following this, a solemn high mass was celebrated on an altar which the Commander had caused to be erected, by the Rev. Chaplain of our frigate, *Don José Lopez de Nava*, assisted by the chaplain of the packet-boat, *Don José Maria Diaz*, and the four friars aforesaid—this being the first mass which was said in this land in honour of our Lord God Almighty,—and for the extirpation of the Devil and of all idolatry.—The sermon was given by the Very Rev. Father President—*Severo Patero*, Apostolic Missionary of the order of *San Francis* and of the Royal College of *San Ferdinand* of Propaganda of the Faith—of the City of Mexico.—

This function being concluded, the aforesaid Commander as a further sign and testimony of the taking of possession, caused a tree to be cut, which he had made into a cross, into which he engraved the Holy Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, with four capital letters *I. N. R. I.*—and wrote at the foot of the cross: *Carolus tertius, Rex Hispaniorum.*—

In Witness Whereof these presents were signed by the Commander, and witnessed by the Captain of the Packet-boat, "*San Carlos,*" *Don Gonzalez Lopez de Haro*; the first pilot of the Armada, *Don José Tovar*, the chaplains aforesaid *Don Jose Lopez de Nava*, *Don José Maria Diaz*, and the four friars of the College of *San Ferdinand*—And I the Notary appointed by the said Commander, authenticate these presents as a true testimony of what took place—as it has been related herewith.—Signed: *Estevan José Martinez—Gonzales Lopez de Haro,—José Tovar y Taniariz—Dr. José Alexandro*

Lopez de Nava—Fray Lorenzo Lacies—Fray José Espi—Fray Francisco Miguel Sanchez—
Before me

Rafaël Cañizares—

This is a copy: Mexico 27th August 1789

—Antonio Bonillaz.—

The Spanish settlement, so pompously launched, was abandoned late in the autumn of 1789, the fort dismantled, and everything taken back to San Blas. This step had been ordered almost as soon as the expedition sailed. The reason is unknown. Flores, the viceroy of Mexico, under whose direction the step was taken, seems to have been of a vacillating nature. His successor, Revilla Gigedo, following the Royal Instructions, purposed to sustain with vigor the new establishment at Nootka, and had already planned to send three vessels with complete equipment, supplies, and reinforcements. The unexpected return of Martinez with the whole Nootka settlement completely shattered his arrangements. He was determined, nevertheless, to maintain effectively the Spanish possession of the port, not only for its inherent value, but to prevent its being occupied by the British, who had entered into the maritime trade with great energy and contemplated the erection of trading posts on the coast.

He re-cast his schemes, and in February, 1790, three vessels, well-fitted and carrying supplies for a year, sailed from San Blas for Nootka. A garrison, consisting of two corporals and eighteen privates, formed part of the expedition. Elisa, the new commandante, was instructed to re-establish the fort; to erect the necessary buildings; to seek the friendship of the natives; to defend the settlement from attack by them or by any foreign power; and to explore carefully the northern coast and the strait of Fuca. In the last order can be seen a remnant of the belief in the north-west passage.

The first official act was the re-taking of possession, with all the glitter and glamour of the preceding occasion. The abandoned fort and barracks were re-established. And now upon the shores of Friendly Cove arose a little Spanish village: the earlier attempt had scarcely reached the point where it could properly be called a village. The gigantic firs were felled to make room for the irregularly built houses, which were scattered along the one straggling street. All day long, thrown back from the heights of San Miguel, the sound of axe and hammer re-echoed over the narrow waters of the placid cove.

The most imposing structure, occupying a prominent position almost in the centre of the horseshoe shore, was the dwelling of the commandante, Elisa, and later Quadra and Alava. Clustered about it were some sixteen houses: store-rooms for the supplies for the set-

tlement and for war materials for the fort and the vessels, a hospital, a bakery, blacksmith's and carpenter's workshops, and residences for the officers and men. The church, too, with the priest's house and the church yard, stood in a conspicuous position. The impressiveness of the primeval stillness of Sabbaths and holy days was only increased by the mellow notes of the angelus and the sweet and solemn hymn of the devout worshippers. But in the eyes of the natives, Father Catala, the Franciscan monk, was the possessor of a strange magical power, akin to that of their medicine men.

A brick-lined well, whose ruins yet remain, supplied the little village with abundance of *buen agua*, as the old plan has it. Gardens and enclosures for domestic animals edged their way amongst the blackened stumps. And in the background, hemming in the scene, was the dense forest, with its mighty colonnades, dense, dank, and sombre. From the commandante's residence ran a narrow, winding path, about a mile in length, leading to the little lake, so familiar in later years, as the place where Jewitt, the captive of Nootka, was accustomed to spend his Sundays.

The settlement was purely military. It existed by official order only, and not as a result of voluntary action. Of colonists in the real sense of the word there were none. Family life was unknown. So far as any records show the whole population was male.

The garrison, having no military duties to perform, gave their attention to cultivation. The soil was found to be productive. Vegetables of all kinds were grown plentifully, in these, the first gardens in Old Oregon. Years afterwards Jewitt found on the spot, self-propagated onions, peas, and turnips, though the latter had so deteriorated that nothing but the tops was fit to be eaten. When wheat and corn were tried, however, the results were disappointing, owing, probably, to the proximity of the ocean. Vancouver has very little to say about the gardens of the settlement. He gave his attention to livestock, and reports that "the poultry, consisting of fowls and turkies, was in excellent condition, and in abundance, as were the black cattle and swine."

The settlement was a piece of Old Spain, in miniature. Spanish manners, customs, and ideals held sway as rigidly upon the wild shores of Nootka as in the precincts of Madrid. All vessels, royal or merchant, entering the sound, saluted the fort, punctiliously, and received the same courtesy in return. The commandantes, or governors, Elisa, Quadra, and Alava, vied in extending to all visitors the Spanish grace of hospitality. They kept open house, and showered upon British

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had no commerce: it desired none. No vessels came to trade with it. Such merchant vessels as did cast anchor in the port of Nootka sought the trade of the neighboring Indian tribes; and the Indians looked only to these vessels for trade. The settlement was intended principally as a support of the claim of Spanish sovereignty; though it afforded a place of refuge and a centre of operations for the three or four Spanish public vessels on the northern part of the coast. It is true that soon after its establishment the Nootka Convention, provided for its abandonment; it might therefore be urged that under such circumstances it could not be expected to grow; but, apart from that agreement, its nature and purpose contained no germ of growth. It was created by official action; it was terminated by the same.

In March, 1795, as a result of the arrangement arrived at by Great Britain and Spain, the flag of Castile and Leon was lowered on the ramparts of San Miguel, never to float again. So unpretentious was the ceremony on that occasion that no details of the event have been preserved. The practical British mind was more interested in the result than in the formalities. Once more the fort was dismantled; on this occasion, permanently. The buildings were abandoned, and in part destroyed; and, with gladsome hearts it may be assumed, the Spaniards returned to Mexico.

No sooner had they departed than down upon the scene swooped the natives, rejoicing greatly to re-occupy their old village site, with such added improvements as remained. Every bit of iron, every scrap of metal left behind was greedily seized upon. This search completed the demolition of the Spanish buildings. To the Indians the churchyard was a veritable mine. Like ghouls they exhumed the coffins for the sake of the nails, which they converted into fish hooks.

Soon all evidence of civilization was blotted out. The Indian came again into his own; and once more there arose on the shores of Friendly Cove a native village, with its dozens of canoes drawn up on the beautiful stretch of sloping sand. Jewitt, who was at Nootka eight years later, mentions only the foundations of the church and of the governor's house as remaining. To-day, evidences of the existence of the old well can be found; and an indistinct ridge shows where the houses stood. Occasionally one of those old-fashioned, strange-shaped Spanish bricks is dug up. Of the frowning fort, so prominent in the Spanish pictures of Nootka, no vestige remains. Ichabod! Ichabod!

But though so soon and so completely vanished all material evidence of Spanish occupation, others of a less tangible kind remain. Tradition points out the site of the governor's house, the church, and the burial ground. Spanish numbers up to ten can be counted by

many Indians of the neighborhood, though only a linguist could recognize their identity. Roman Catholic forms of worship and customs at Christmas-tide are still remembered. The late Father Brabant writes:

I asked him if there was any priest in Nootka during the time of the Spaniards' occupation of the fort and cove. He at once brightened up and began his narrative: "Oh yes, there were priests—two priests, very heavy and very corpulent—they had no hair, were almost completely bald, and when the sun stops [solstice of winter] they had two babes. My grand uncle used to go and see the people in church (indicating the place where the chapel was erected, close to where the chief has his house now) and the people would go on their knees and get up; yes, there were priests—two big bald men, and the Spaniards kept Sunday." The description of the Indian is very accurate. The priests are described as corpulent, for the Franciscan monks wear heavy cloaks, and even a delicate man looks robust when clad in their robes. These Franciscan monks came from South America and Spain. Their heads were considered bald by the Indians, though the appearance was a consequence of the tonsure or shaved head of the monk, it being a point of their rules and description to wear the tonsure. The babes at the time of the solstice of winter, Christmas-tide, were noticed in the church by the Indians, it being the practice in many Roman Catholic churches to erect a crib as a representation of Christ's birth in the stable of Bethlehem, only the Indian mentions two babes instead of one, the other may have been a statue of the Virgin Mother of our Saviour. An Indian woman one day sang at my request different Catholic hymns before the late Archbishop Seghers.

F. W. HOWAY.