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REESTABLISHING THE LOCALE OF CALIFORNIA'S FIRST AMERICAN-DESIGNATED PLACE NAME ON SANTA CATALINA ISLAND

Ivan H. Strudwick¹

ABSTRACT.—From 1801 to late 1803, captains and co-owners of the *Lelia Byrd*, William Shaler of Boston and Richard J. Cleveland of Salem, Massachusetts, voyaged to the west coast of North America where they traded for sea otter fur that they then sold in Canton, China. They traveled to the Hawaiian Islands and made a gift of horses, the first in Hawaii, to King Kamehameha I, “the Great.” During 1804–1805, Shaler sailed back to the California coast to continue trading while Cleveland sailed to Boston. Shaler’s narrative of the 1804–1805 voyage is the earliest, most extensive account of California written firsthand by an American observer. On 1 May 1805, Shaler was the first American to name a California locale: a “small but very fine port” on Santa Catalina Island, which he named after his friend M. De Roussillon. At Port Roussillon, Shaler and his crew careened the *Lelia Byrd* between 1 May and 12 June 1805 and stayed with their “Indian friends.” This harbor is identified as Avalon Bay in *California Place Names* (Gudde 1949), but further investigation indicates Port Roussillon is actually Isthmus Cove at Two Harbors.

RESUMEN.—Entre 1801 y fines de 1803, los capitanes y copropietarios del *Lelia Byrd*, William Shaler, de Boston, y Richard J. Cleveland, de Salem, Massachusetts, viajaron a la costa oeste de Norteamérica donde comercializaron piel de nutria marina, que luego vendieron en Cantón, China. Se dirigieron a las Islas Hawaianas y regalaron caballos, los primeros en Hawaii, al rey Kamehameha I, “El Grande”. Entre 1804 y 1805, Shaler navegó de regreso a la costa de California para continuar con su actividad comercial mientras Cleveland navegó hacia Boston. El relato del viaje de Shaler de 1804 a 1805 es el primero y el más completo sobre California que haya escrito un observador estadounidense personalmente. El 1º de mayo de 1805, Shaler fue el primer estadounidense que nombró un lugar en California: un “puerto pequeño, pero muy bonito” en la Isla Santa Catalina, a la cual denominó con el nombre de su amigo, M. De Roussillon. En Port Roussillon, Shaler y su tripulación viraron el *Lelia Byrd*, entre el 1º de mayo y el 12 de junio de 1805, y permanecieron con sus “amigos indios”. Este puerto es identificado como *Avalon Bay* en *California Place Names* (Gudde 1949), pero las investigaciones posteriores indican que Port Roussillon es, en realidad, Isthmus Cove en Two Harbors.

What is currently known about the events described within this report was recorded in separate accounts by William Shaler (1935) and Richard J. Cleveland (1842), co-owners of the *Lelia Byrd*. First published in 1808, Shaler’s account of the 1804–1805 years aboard the *Lelia Byrd*, during which Port Roussillon was named, has been called “the earliest first-hand, full account of California by an American” (Bynum 1935:21). Cleveland’s 1842 account of the 1801–1803 years aboard the *Lelia Byrd* was written after a lifetime of travels and offers further details.

The purpose of this paper is to show that Shaler’s Port Roussillon (Shaler 1935) is Isthmus Cove, despite reference to it being Avalon Bay (Gudde 1949). This determination is done through a careful examination of Shaler’s original description of the locale, as well as a consideration of both early historic-period use of the island based on maps and the availabil-

ity of freshwater at Avalon and Isthmus Cove. An appendix provides additional context, describing M. De Roussillon and the details of Shaler and Cleveland’s voyages aboard the *Lelia Byrd*.

THE NAMING OF PORT ROUSSILLON

In California, the first locale ever named by an American was on Santa Catalina Island (Gudde 1949:18, 1998:21). After natives communicated that there was a “good harbour” on Catalina, Captain William Shaler of Boston visited the harbor in his ship, the *Lelia Byrd*, on 14 March 1805. Leaking and in need of repair, the vessel required a safe port in which to perform the extensive overhaul. Shaler initially remained at the harbor only a few days to verify the actual conditions there before returning later with the ship for a longer stay:

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We found the harbour every thing that could be desired, and I determined that, after collecting all the [sea otter] skins on the coast, I would return to it and careen the ship, which she was by this time greatly in want of. After completing our business on the coast, we returned to Santa Catalina, and anchored in the harbour on the 1st of May [1805]. As I was the first navigator who had ever visited and surveyed this place, I took the liberty of naming it after my much respected friend, M. De Roussillon. We warped the ship into a small cove, and landed the cargo and everything moveable, under tents that we had previously prepared for their reception. The Indian inhabitants of this island, to the amount of about 150 men, women, and children, came and encamped with us, and readily afforded us every aid in their power. (Shaler 1935:47)

After nearly 6 weeks, the *Lelia Byrd* had been repaired and reloaded. Shaler describes the situation and his future course:

By the 9th of June [1805], the ship was again rigged with a jury mizzen-mast, our cargo on board, and we were again ready for sea. On the 12th, we bid adieu to our Indian friends, and left Port Roussillon¹ with the intention of running down the coast, and, if we found the ship not to leak so much as to be unsafe, to run for the Sandwich [Hawaiian] Islands, where I determined to leave her, and to take passage in some north-west fur trader for Canton. (Shaler 1935:49)

This is the only instance in Shaler's account where he uses the name Port Roussillon. It has long been thought that Port Roussillon was Avalon Bay. The naming of Avalon Bay is described in *California Place Names*:

The former name of Avalon Bay, and perhaps the first name on California soil ever applied by an American, was Roussillon Bay: 'As I was the first navigator who had ever visited and surveyed this place, I took the liberty of naming it after my much respected friend, M. De Roussillon' (William Shaler, 1803, in *American Register*, III, 147 f.). (Gudde 1998:21)

The description in Gudde's most recent (4th) edition of *California Place Names* (Gudde 1998:21) is identical to that in the first edition of 1949 (Gudde 1949:18). No new information on "Roussillon Bay" (Port Roussillon) has been

added in the nearly 50 years between the first and fourth editions of *California Place Names*.

THE 1801–1805 *LELIA BYRD* VOYAGES

Richard J. Cleveland—1842

In August 1801, the 175-ton brig *Lelia Byrd* was purchased in Hamburg, Germany, by 2 sea captains: William Shaler of Boston and his friend Richard J. Cleveland of Salem, Massachusetts. The men purchased the vessel with the intent of trading for sea otter fur along the western coast of North America and selling the fur for a profit in Canton, China. In preparation for their initial voyage, which lasted from 1801 to late 1803, they drew lots to determine their duties. Shaler assumed the role of captain and Cleveland became supercargo, in charge of the ship's cargo. Highlights of this voyage include the introduction of the first horses in Hawaii as a gift for King Kamehameha I. At the end of an eventful and ultimately successful trip, they reached China in August 1803. This 1801–1803 trading voyage is described in Cleveland's detailed autobiography, *A Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises* (Cleveland 1842), published 34 years after Shaler's 1808 narrative. Shaler returned to the west coast of North America aboard the *Lelia Byrd*, while Cleveland invested in tea and silk and sailed to Boston as a passenger aboard the *Alert* (Cleveland 1842: 240). Shaler's subsequent 1804–1805 trading voyage along the west coast of North America aboard the *Lelia Byrd* (Shaler 1935) was conducted without Cleveland.

William Shaler—1808 (1935)

After Cleveland's departure for Boston, Shaler and his crew sailed from Canton on 8 February 1804 to the Columbia River on the west coast of North America, then south past California as far as Guatemala in Central America, north to upper California, and finally south to lower California and on to Hawaii (Shaler 1935). It was in Hawaii in early September 1805, that Shaler traded the *Lelia Byrd* to "King Tamaihamaiha" (Kamehameha I) for a smaller vessel that returned to California under the command of Shaler's mate John Hudson, in a continued effort to trade for sea

¹While Shaler (1935:47, 49) twice spells the surname "Roussillon" and Bynum (1935:15) once spells it "Roussilon," Cleveland (1842:156, 159, 162, etc.) repeatedly spells it "Rouissillon." Although the place name is "Port Roussillon," details as to why "Rouissillon" is the correct surname spelling are provided in Strudwick (2012) and also in the appendix to this paper.

otter fur (Shaler 1935:100–101). From Hawaii, Shaler continued on to Canton aboard the *Huron* with his furs, where his narrative ends in November 1805. Shaler's description of this 1804–1805 voyage was originally published in 1808 (*The American Register: or General Repository of History, Politics, and Science, Part I for 1808, Volume III*) and was reprinted once in its entirety in 1935 (Shaler 1935).

DETERMINING THE ACTUAL LOCATION OF PORT ROUSSILLON

After departing Santa Catalina Island on 12 June 1805, Shaler adds to his account additional descriptive information concerning the geographical, ethnographical, and political landscape and the natural resources of upper and lower California. Shaler (1935:49–50) states his reason for providing this additional information:

As one of the most important events of our voyage took place at the island of Santa Catalina, and our long stay there gave us an opportunity of observing the manner and genius of its inhabitants, I shall here subjoin a brief description of them: to this I shall also add a general account of California, composed from such information as I collected during my voyage to that coast.

As part of this account, Shaler includes a general description of Santa Catalina Island in which he more accurately describes the port where the *Lelia Byrd* was careened:

Directly opposite to San Pedro lies the island of Santa Catalina, on the north side of which is a small but very fine port, where ships of any burden may ride in the most perfect safety at all seasons. As it is always smooth in this port, it is peculiarly proper for careening and repairing ships: there are several springs of water in its neighbourhood, which afford a sufficient supply of that necessary article at all times, and of the best quality. The proximity of this island to all this coast, from Point Conception to San Juan Capistrano, renders its port of importance, as a winter harbour, to all ships that have anything to do there in that season. (Shaler 1935:70)

According to Shaler's description of the Santa Catalina Island port as he observed it, the location of Port Roussillon "on the north side" of Catalina more closely matches the actual location of Isthmus Cove than it does the location of Avalon Bay (Fig. 1).

Historical Depictions of Santa Catalina Island

Three maps of Santa Catalina Island are presented here (Figs. 1–3). Two historic maps (Figs. 2, 3) show that when the maps were made, the center of human activity on the island was the isthmus to the north, not Avalon Bay to the south. A graphic depiction of Isthmus Cove "on the north side" of Catalina is provided as a map (Fig. 2) drawn in 1602 by Father Antonio de la Ascensión, one of three friars who accompanied Sebastián Vizcaíno on an expedition to California in 1602–1603 (Wagner 1929:234–235, McCawley 1996:78). Ascensión's map is the earliest known depiction of Santa Catalina Island naming island landmarks, including the area first called on this map Isthmus Cove. The map identifies 2 anchorages along the eastern shore (both marked by anchor symbols): one in the north, annotated "Puerto de Santa Catalina," and another in the south, annotated "Rancherías," or native villages. Near the northern anchorage marked "Puerto" is a symbol and a second notation, "Pueblo," meaning town, which McCawley (2002:42–43) identifies as the native village of Nájquar (archaeological site SCAI-39). This map shows the north portion of the island extending to the northwest, making the port appear to be at the north end of the island. Avalon Bay is not depicted or identified as an anchorage by Father Ascensión when he drew the map in 1602.

An 1867 plat map of Catalina (Fig. 3) also provides an indication that Isthmus Cove was more significant at the time. This plat map shows that, in terms of named landmarks and harbors, "Isthmus Harbor" at the "Isthmus" exhibited the majority of human activity, whereas Avalon Bay is simply "Johnston's Harbor." It was not until the late 1880s that the area where the town of Avalon now exists began to develop.

Geographic and Physiographic Characteristics

The eastern (leeward) side of Catalina is protected from winter gales and is a haven from winter storms. Both Avalon Bay and Isthmus Cove are harbors on the island's leeward side (Fig. 1). Isthmus Cove is located near the north end of the island, whereas Avalon Bay is located near the island's south end. Santa Catalina Island generally trends northwest by southeast. The portion of the island northwest of the isthmus trends west-northwest



Fig. 1. Map of Santa Catalina Island.

by east-southeast, and Isthmus Cove faces just slightly east of north.

Today, the isthmus on Santa Catalina Island is known as “Two Harbors,” and the narrow strip of land between the northern and southern portions of the island creates 2 harbors: Catalina Harbor on the windward (west) side and Isthmus Cove on the leeward (east) side (Figs. 1, 3). Unlike Isthmus Cove and Avalon (Fig. 4), Catalina Harbor has a gradually sloping inner beach of mud and very fine-grained sand, with rock and gravel along the sides (Fig. 5). The inner portion of Isthmus Cove on

Catalina’s leeward side has a sandy beach with almost no gravel (Figs. 6, 7). The stretch of sandy beach at Isthmus Cove slopes more steeply than the innermost portion of Catalina Harbor. These differences are implied by Ascensión on his 1602 map (Fig. 2), which identifies “Puerto de Santa Catalina” (Isthmus Cove) as an anchorage and Catalina Harbor as an “ensenada,” or bay.

At Isthmus Cove, the gradient of the beach changes at different locations. The southeastern part of the sandy stretch of cove is near a native village (CA-SCAI-39), which is located

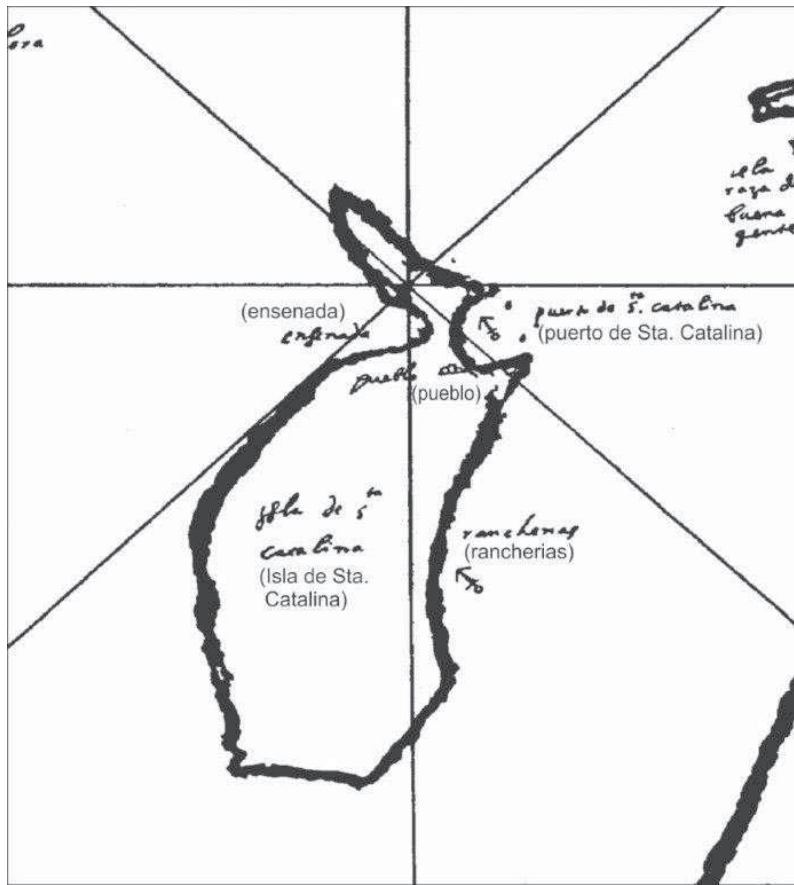


Fig. 2. Father Antonio de la Ascensión's 1602 map of Santa Catalina Island (Wagner 1929:235).

on a low bluff along the beach (Figs. 6, 7). Near the bluff, the beach slopes into the sea more steeply, and it slopes less steeply as one moves northwest along the cove and away from the low bluff and native village site. Somewhere near the central portion of the cove where the pier is now located, a high tide would have easily allowed a ship to come sufficiently close to shore so that a receding tide would cause the ship to lay over on its side. Though it would have been possible to careen a ship at either Isthmus Cove or Catalina Harbor, Isthmus Cove appears to have been more suitable.

Hydrology

A final reason for concluding Port Roussillon is Isthmus Cove rather than Avalon Bay is the lack of quality drinking water at Avalon Bay. Prior to 1919, wells drilled in Avalon Valley produced a small amount of inferior quality

water (Lippincott 1923:1). Isthmus Cove was known to have had at least one major spring of freshwater near the native village of Nájquar. An 1897 War Department map of the isthmus (Source: National Archives at Riverside) identifies a well at Isthmus Cove and "fresh water" at the Catalina Harbor side of the isthmus.

Historic use of the island and hydrological reasons aside, the primary argument for Port Roussillon being Isthmus Cove is its location at the north end of Santa Catalina Island in a calm, protected location well-suited to careening and repairing Shaler's ship.

SUMMARY

The first California locale named by an American, "Port Roussillon," was given its name on 1 May 1805 by Captain William Shaler aboard the *Lelia Byrd*. Staying at Port

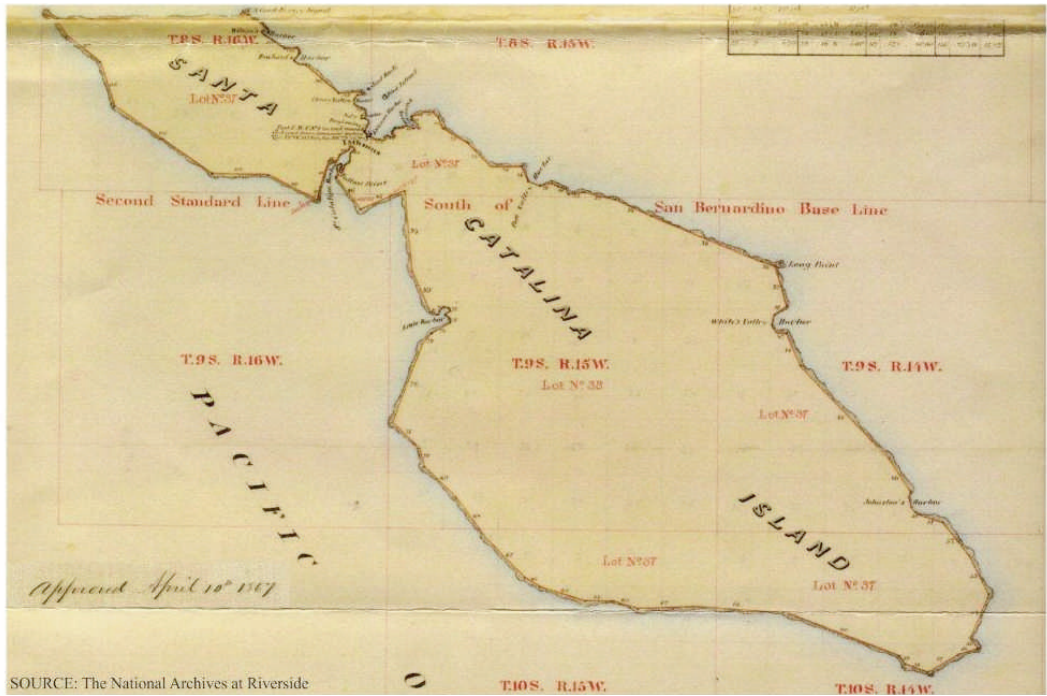


Fig. 3. An 1867 plat map of Santa Catalina Island.

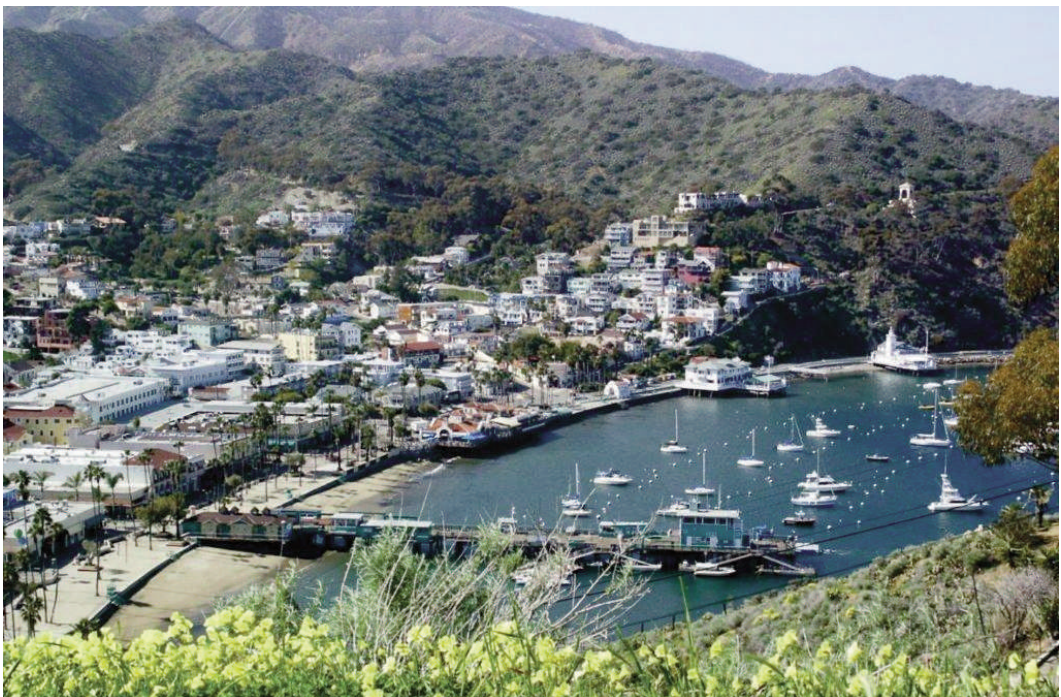


Fig. 4. View of Avalon Bay looking west. Built environment obstructs harbor margin, although natural sand exists at water's edge near the pier.



Fig. 5. View of Catalina Harbor looking southwest from the isthmus.

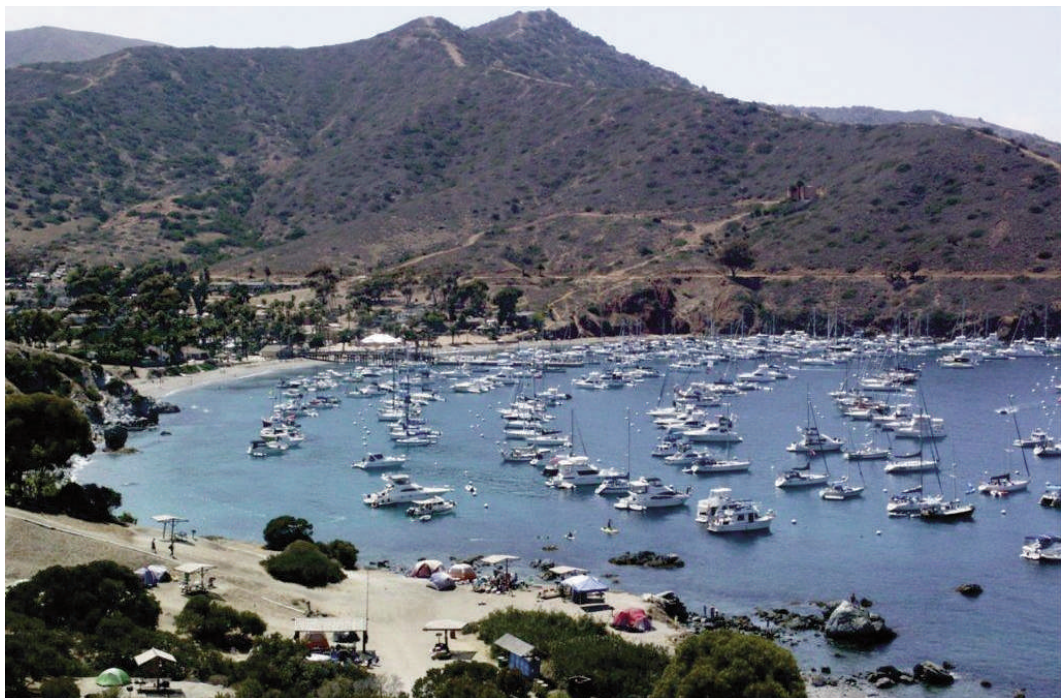


Fig. 6. View of Isthmus Cove and the community of Two Harbors looking west-southwest. The native village of Nájquar (CA-SCAI-39) is located on a low bluff to the left of the pier.



Fig. 7. View of sandy beach at Isthmus Cove looking northwest from the low bluff atop site CA-SCAI-39. The *Lelia Byrd* was probably careened in the vicinity of the pier.

Roussillon 6 weeks, Shaler and his crew careened the ship before sailing south to Baja California and then on to Hawaii. The location named by Shaler was identified in *California Place Names* (Gudde 1949) as Avalon Bay. The characteristics of the harbor as described by Shaler (1935:70), its location near the north end of Catalina, its suitability for careening ships, and its proximity to good quality freshwater all indicate that Isthmus Cove is the actual location of Port Roussillon. Due to the gradient of the beach and the absence of submerged rocks, it is likely that the *Lelia Byrd* was careened near the central portion of Isthmus Cove.

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complete this report. Dr. Keith Dixon and Dr. Henry Koerper provided many valuable comments. Editing of this report and presentation was provided by my wife, Diane Valko Strudwick, who was shanghaied into yet another project. Editors at *Western North American Naturalist* also provided comments. I thank all of the aforementioned for their assistance and support in this endeavor.

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APPENDIX.—The following selected details of the 1801–1805 voyages of the *Lelia Byrd* come from Shaler (1935) and Cleveland (1842). This information is intended to supplement and provide background information to the previously described voyage during which Shaler named Port Roussillon. No new references are cited herein.

M. DE ROUSSILLON

Who was Monsieur De Roussillon and why did Captain Shaler think highly enough of him to name a harbor on Catalina “Port Roussillon” in his honor? Shaler’s 1808 narrative is frustratingly short on details concerning his “much respected friend, M. De Roussillon” (Shaler 1935:47). Though Bynum (1935: 15) states only that the “Comte de Roussillon” was a passenger, Cleveland’s 1842 account is far more enlightening. In describing the 1801 purchase of the *Lelia Byrd* in Hamburg, Germany, Cleveland (1842:156) includes the following concerning the “Count de Rouissillon”:

During our sojourn at Hamburg, we had become acquainted with the Count de Rouissillon, a young Polish nobleman, of superior education and talents. He had fought for the liberty of his country, as aide-camp to the unfortunate Kosciusco; and being one of the proscribed, was living in Hamburg on slender means, and without occupation. In the society of a gentleman of such intelligence, accomplishments, and companionable traits, we knew that we should be repaid for the additional expense of taking him as a *compagnon de voyage*, and we agreed to invite him to accompany us as such. He had never been at sea, and a voyage round the world to a man like him, reared in the interior of a continent, offered such attractions that he acceded to the proposal not only without hesitation, but with expressions of great satisfaction and delight.

The Count de Rouissillon thus voyaged with Shaler and Cleveland on the journey from Europe to America aboard the *Lelia Byrd*. In the portion of his narrative that covers this voyage, Cleveland focuses on Rouissillon only briefly but does describe Rouissillon’s attempt to help obtain official permission to sell cargo in the port of San Blas, Mexico, by traveling to Guadalajara and Mexico City in August–December of 1802. During this period, Shaler and Cleveland were ordered to leave San Blas, and they at first awaited Rouissillon’s return while anchored at the nearby Tres Marias (Three Marias) Islands (Cleveland 1842:190–199). While in San Blas, Shaler and Cleveland had purchased 1600 sea otter skins and had also obtained permission from Mexico’s Viceroy to trade a small part of their cargo. However, it appeared that the local governor and the commandant of the port were scheming to seize the *Lelia Byrd*. By sailing before the feared raid, Shaler and Cleveland kept their ship and cargo; but by leaving San Blas hurriedly, they were forced to leave some of their cargo ashore with Rouissillon. It was at that point that Rouissillon’s journey aboard the *Lelia Byrd* came to an end. Rouissillon planned to stay in Mexico, sell the merchandise, and use the proceeds to travel to the United States where he would reunite with the 2 captains. Here, Cleveland provides an in-depth description of the Count:

It was with feelings of deep regret, that we parted, here, with our excellent and amiable friend the Count John de Rouissillon, with whom we had been so intimately associated for so long a period, and who had shared so largely in the variously perplexing scenes, incident to the prosecution of our object. . . . We had left with him, manufactures to the amount of about three thousand dollars cost; and which were worth, at the actual prices, more than three times that cost. From the proceeds of this, after defraying his expenses, he was to account with us in the United States, where we anticipated much pleasure in meeting him, in the course of the ensuing year. At parting, he expressed the unalloyed enjoyment he had experienced on board, his grateful feelings for our confidence, and his earnest desire of realizing the pleasure of meeting us again in that land of liberty and of equal rights, of which, he said, he should be proud to become a citizen.

The Count de Rouissillon was the descendant of an ancient noble family of Poland. An advocate for liberty, he could not brook the subjugation of his country; and for his efforts to avert it, he was proscribed, and was without a home when we became acquainted with him at Hamburgh. He possessed a powerful intellect, and gave evidence, that great care had been taken in its cultivation. His acquirements in mathematics, in astronomy, in music, in drawing, were very respectable, and there was scarcely a European language with which he was not familiar. Having with him, among others, books in the Russian, Polish, and German languages, the Spanish authorities, who are extremely watchful and rigorous in their examination of all books, were actually confounded by them; but allowed them to pass, on the well-grounded conviction, that nobody in the country could read them, and, therefore, that they could do no harm. For these attainments he was not more indebted to a fine intellect than to an untiring industry, which was so habitual, that he seemed to grudge a moment's time that was passed without adding something to his knowledge. So that when walking the deck for exercise, if there was nobody to walk and converse with him, he would be engaged in practising some new music on his flute. Being at this time only twenty-eight years of age, his prospect for honorable distinction seemed all that his ambition could desire; but, unfortunately, his earthly course was cut short not long after we parted. To our great grief we learned, on arriving in the United States, that he died at Mexico some time in the year 1803. The exclusive policy of the Spanish government, relating to all foreigners . . . made it so difficult to obtain any information from Mexico, that we were discouraged from any attempt to ascertain the particulars of his death, or to learn what became of our property, or of his effects; and, to this day, we remain in ignorance of every thing relating to these subjects. (Cleveland 1842: 203–205)

The extent of Cleveland's description of Count John de Rouissillon leaves little doubt that although Shaler may have been just as close a friend with the

Count as was Cleveland, Cleveland recorded the relationship in much greater detail. There is no question that both Shaler and Cleveland thought highly of Rouissillon, since the only place name denoted by Shaler in his 1808 narrative is Port Roussillon and Cleveland's narrative contains several pages devoted to describing their good friend.

Inasmuch as Cleveland chronicles such intimate personal details, his repeated spelling of the Count's surname as "Rouissillon" (Cleveland 1842:156, 159, 162, etc.) is probably correct. The spellings "Roussillon" (Shaler 1935:47, 49) and "Roussilon" (Bynum 1935:15) are probably incorrect. Shaler unambiguously spells it "Roussillon" twice when naming the harbor on 1 May 1805. Thus, as originally named, "Port Roussillon," the first California location to be named by an American is likely an incorrect spelling of Count John de Rouissillon's name.

THE TWO CAPTAINS: RICHARD J. CLEVELAND AND WILLIAM SHALER

Hailing from the Salem, Massachusetts, counting house of Elias Hasket Derby, Esq., Cleveland had been a sea captain since 1795. He traded merchandise and sailed to such distant locations as Cape Town, Batavia, Canton, Calcutta, Malaysia, the Philippines, Japan, the northwest coast of America, and even Hawaii before 1800. It was in pursuit of establishing such trade routes that Cleveland had arrived at the Isle of France (now Mauritius) on 14 May 1800 where he met William Shaler, one of only 3 Americans on the island (Cleveland 1842:122). The 2 men lived for 10 months at the Consular residence on the Isle of France and spent a total of more than 4 years together (Cleveland 1842:241), most of it aboard the *Lelia Byrd*. Shaler, a sea captain from Boston, was born in 1778 (Bynum 1935:20), making him 22 in 1800. Cleveland was born in 1773 and was 68 when he published his 1842 narrative (Cleveland 1842:viii), making him 26 or 27 when he met Shaler in 1800. The 2 friends departed the Isle of France on 21 March 1801, bound for Europe on the *Cronberg* (Cleveland 1842:143).

PURCHASE OF THE *LELIA BYRD*

In 1799, Cleveland had captained the 50-ton English cutter *Caroline* (originally named *Dragon*; Cleveland 1842:46), trading with natives of the Queen Charlotte Islands and vicinity for sea otter furs. Cleveland had then sailed to Canton, selling the furs at a substantial profit. Cleveland shared his knowledge of this trading opportunity with Shaler, who had become his good friend during the 10 months they resided together on the Isle of France. During their voyage to Europe on the *Cronberg*, Cleveland and Shaler

had discussed the project of a voyage to the west coast of North America; and indeed, we had so far agreed upon it, as to make it dependent alone on the circumstance of meeting a suitable American vessel, which could be obtained at a reasonable price. (Cleveland 1842:154)

Knowing that American vessels were available in Copenhagen, they first traveled to Denmark; but not finding what they wanted, they proceeded to Hamburg where a number of American vessels “almost equal to what is usual in any one of the great commercial ports in the United States” were available (Cleveland 1842:155).

In selecting one, on board of which there was a prospect of passing two or three years, and in countries where repairs and articles of equipment were of doubtful attainment, it was important to unite the properties of strength, durability of material, swiftness of sailing, capacity for carrying, and comfortable accommodations. Such a one was offered us in the brig *Lelia Byrd* of Portsmouth, Virginia, of a hundred and seventy-five tons burden, which we purchased at a fair price. (Cleveland 1842:155)

Purchased in August 1801, the *Lelia Byrd* was refitted and loaded by late September and ready to sail in late October (Cleveland 1842:156–157). Though few specifics are known concerning the *Lelia Byrd*, what can be gleaned from Shaler’s and Cleveland’s accounts is that the vessel was a brig (2 masts) when purchased, carried six 3-pound brass cannons and an arsenal of guns and powder, and had a total of 15 men, including Captain Shaler, Supercargo Cleveland, a mate, stewards, a cook, and others. Before enlisting a crew, Shaler and Cleveland drew lots to determine who would be captain.

The decision was in favor of Mr. Shaler, who took command and enlisted the men, while I embarked in the capacity of supercargo, but with an understanding that these designations were only for form’s sake; and that the duties of each station were to be reciprocally performed by each. Our interests in the vessel, and in the cargo being equal, there existed no inequality in our powers, or in the profits, of whatever description, that might be realized. (Cleveland 1842:156)

SAILING FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA

On 8 November 1801, Shaler and Cleveland sailed the *Lelia Byrd* from the Elbe River near Hamburg, reaching the Bay of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 2 January 1802 (Cleveland 1842:158–165). The superior sailing ability of the *Lelia Byrd* was evident the first day at sea when, just 4 hours after setting sail with a dozen other vessels, only 2 of the fleet were visible astern.

By 24 February 1802, they had arrived at the port of Valparaiso, Chile, which was the nearest large port to Chile’s capital, Santiago. Their reason for visiting Valparaiso was that trading would be

more advantageous near a populous city such as Santiago. Finding that the Chilean government would not allow them to trade, they continued onward, reaching San Blas, Mexico, on 11 July 1802 (Cleveland 1842:189). It was in San Blas, and also while at the nearby Tres Mariás Islands, that the previously related incidents occurred that resulted in leaving Count John de Rouissillon and some cargo ashore.

CONVERTING THE BRIG *LELIA BYRD* INTO A SHIP

In January 1803 while at San Blas, the crew “rigged a mizzenmast, and converted our brig into a ship” (Cleveland 1842:200). The purpose in doing this was to stall for time in order to obtain 1600 sea otter skins, which Shaler and Cleveland knew could be sold for a large profit in Canton. The third and newest mast was located near the vessel’s stern and it increased the number of sails on the vessel and the sailing speed.

SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND

Departing San Blas and the Tres Mariás Islands on 14 February 1803, the *Lelia Byrd* sailed next for “San Diego, in California, where we had information of there being a parcel of sea otters’ skins, which might be obtained advantageously” (Cleveland 1842:210). On 16 March, the vessel was becalmed near “St. Clement’s” (San Clemente) Island where the crew observed 11 completely nude individuals, “men, women, and children,” living in a cave on the south side of the island. These natives lived exclusively on fish that they baked “in the earth.”

I had been familiar with the Indians inhabiting various parts of the western coast of America, but never saw any so miserable, so abject, so spiritless, so nearly allied to the brute.

Leaving this wretched family, after distributing among them a few articles of old clothing, we stood to the eastward, under easy sail, all night, and found ourselves, early in the morning, abreast of the port of San Diego. (Cleveland 1842:210)

SKIRMISH IN SAN DIEGO HARBOR

On the afternoon of 17 March 1803, the *Lelia Byrd* anchored about one mile inside the entrance to San Diego Harbor. The next morning, the “exceedingly vain and pompous” Commandant Don Manuel Rodríguez made an official welcome with a “ridiculous display of a ‘little brief authority,’ and pompous parade, I [Cleveland] never before witnessed” (Cleveland 1842:211). Commandant Rodríguez boarded the *Lelia Byrd* by passing between 2 lines of his men who stood with hats off in one hand and drawn swords in the other. The commandant promised to provision the ship with needed

supplies; and, although he forbade the crew from entering the town of San Diego, which was about 3 miles distant, he gave the crew "leave to go on shore in the neighborhood of the vessel." The commandant also left 5 guards on board the vessel in order to prohibit any contraband trade, meaning *any* trade.

That afternoon, Cleveland visited the battery (fort) at the entrance to San Diego Harbor and found it was armed with eight 9-pound brass cannons mounted on carriages. The inspection was brief, however, "as the examination of a battery belonging to a people the most jealous and suspicious on earth, was a delicate business" (Cleveland 1842:212). Talking with the sergeant of the guards on board later that evening, Cleveland ascertained that just a few days earlier a Captain Brown of the ship *Alexander* of Boston had purchased several hundred sea otter skins from the locals and soldiers without permission from the commandant. The furs, possibly exceeding a thousand, were now being held onshore by the commandant who presumably could not sell them without being found out by the people, "as they were all spies on each other." After attempting to purchase the skins, Cleveland realized it was to no avail as it "was evident now, that the object for which we came here was unattainable" (Cleveland 1842:213).

Having received and paid for provisions on 21 March, the crew of the *Lelia Byrd* made preparations to leave San Diego Harbor. However, during the course of the day, offers had been made to sell some of the contraband furs to Shaler and Cleveland, with the delivery to be made on shore after dark. Deciding to accept the clandestine offer, both of the *Lelia Byrd's* boats were sent to shore but only one returned. At dawn, it was evident that the ship's mate and 2 sailors had been captured and were lying tied up on the beach. Cleveland and 4 men, each armed with a brace of loaded pistols, first overpowered and disarmed the guards on board then proceeded to shore where they disarmed 3 more guards and rescued the captured men. The mate reported that soldiers led by Commandant Rodríguez had arrested them immediately upon landing to purchase the furs. Cleveland then realized that the proposal to sell the furs had been bait offered by the commandant to create an excuse to plunder the vessel.

Back on board, the crew members were indignant and ready to fight, but Shaler and Cleveland decided that the best decision was to embark from San Diego Harbor immediately. However, to leave, the ship had to sail nearly a mile inside the harbor before coming abreast of the fort at the harbor entrance. With a waning offshore land breeze, it would take over an hour to pass the fort. The odds seemed heavily weighed against the crew of the *Lelia Byrd*:

Our six three-pounders [cannon], which were all brought on the side of the ship bearing on the fort, and our fifteen men was all our force, with which to resist a battery of six nine-pounders and, at least a hundred men. As soon as our sails were loosed and we began to heave up the anchor, a gun without shot was discharged from the battery and the Spanish flag hoisted; perceiving no effect from this, they fired a shot ahead. By this time our anchor was up, all sail was set, and we were gradually approaching the fort. In the hope of preventing their firing, we caused the guard in their uniforms to stand along in the most exposed and conspicuous station; but it had no effect, not even when so near the fort, that they must have been heard imploring them to desist firing, and seen to fall with their faces to the deck, at every renewed discharge of the cannon. We had been subjected to a cannonade of three quarters of an hour, without returning a shot, and, fortunately, with injury only to our rigging and sails. When arrived abreast the fort, several shot struck our hull, one between wind and water, which was temporarily stopped by a wad of oakum. We now opened our fire, and, at the first broadside, saw numbers, probably of those who came to see the fun, scampering away up the hill at the back of the fort. Our second broadside seemed to have caused the complete abandonment of their guns, as none were fired afterwards; nor could we see any person in the fort, excepting a soldier who stood upon the ramparts, waving his hat, as if to desire us to desist firing.

Having passed out of the reach of their cannon, the poor guards, who had been left on board, saw themselves completely in our power, without the chance of rescue, and probably calculated on such treatment as they knew would have been our lot, if equally in the power of their Commandant. Their exhibition of fear was really ludicrous, for, while we were tying up their fire-arms, so as to prevent their using them, and getting the boat ready to send them harmlessly on shore, they were all the time tremblingly imploring for mercy; nor could they be made to believe, until they were actually on shore, that we intended to do them no harm. When landed and their arms handed to them, they embraced each other, crossed themselves, and fell on their knees in prayer. As our boat was leaving them, they rose up and cried at the utmost stretch of their voices, '*Vivan, vivan los Americanos.*' (Cleveland 1842:215–216)

BAJA CALIFORNIA

After the hole in the side of the ship had been repaired, the *Lelia Byrd* coasted south along Baja California to "the bay of St. Quintín's" (San Quintín), anchoring there on 24 March 1803. At San Quintín, Shaler and Cleveland encountered Captain Brown in the *Alexander*, who described his prior encounter with Commandant Rodríguez, confirming to Cleveland that the commandant had designs on the *Lelia Byrd's* cargo. While at San Quintín, Shaler and Cleveland cleaned and "boot-topped" the ship's bottom due to damage from

marine worms and also repaired the sails and rigging damaged by cannon fire in San Diego Harbor (Cleveland 1842:220).

During their stay at the “bay of St. Quintin’s,” they were visited by several fathers from the nearby missions of San Vincente, San Domingo, San Rosario, and San Fernando, and by the commandant of San Vincente, with a “retinue of Indian domestics” who came from as far as 60 miles away (Cleveland 1842:217). The padres were, together, “a jolly set of fellows” and “very amiable” (Cleveland 1842: 217– 220). In remarking on the padres’ friendliness, Cleveland made an exception of the

Padre of San Vincente, who, it must be acknowledged, had no just pretensions to such character, after boasting, as he did, that he had rendered God service by killing many of the Indians, who obstinately refused to be converted. (Cleveland 1842: 220)

These men visited Shaler and Cleveland for a week, and although the padres were familiar with the “battle of San Diego,” they did not immediately discuss it. When after a few days the padres finally brought up the skirmish, they described it so precisely as to prove their knowledge of the conflict. The eldest of the fathers said that the incident was the subject of a letter the corporal who commanded the battery at San Diego Harbor had written to his senior officer at Loreto:

. . . The letter had been left unsealed, that it might be read at the several missions on its way, and to be sealed at the last mission before arriving at Loreto. While the corporal, in his letter, was severe in his strictures on the conduct of the Commandant [Don Manuel Rodríguez], in first enticing us into this difficulty, and then taking care not to enter the fort until he ascertained, that we were out of reach of cannon shot, he was profuse in his eulogies of us. Our forbearance so long before returning their fire, our humanity and generosity to the guards, under such provocation, and our ceasing to fire when they did, were considered by the corporal as acts of magnanimity, which should recommend us to the kindness and hospitality of all good Spaniards. (Cleveland 1842:218)

The padres expressed their disgust with San Diego’s commandant, Don Manuel Rodríguez, calling him a “poltroon” (mean-spirited coward). *Poltroon* must have been a popular word of contempt in the early 1800s based on its multiple uses in Cleveland’s (1842) account.

On 3 May 1803, the *Lelia Byrd* sailed from San Quintín Bay “bound to the Island of Guadaloupe . . . in the hope of there obtaining a supply of water, for that which we found at St. Quintin’s was of an inferior quality, and was only obtained by digging a well” (Cleveland 1842:220). Unable to obtain water on Guadaloupe Island, Shaler and Cleveland sailed directly east to the coast, where they anchored in a

small bay nearest to the Mission of San Borgia. They “were visited there by the Father of that mission, Mariano Apolonario,” with 20 domestics and 25 horses and mules (Cleveland 1842:221), who had apparently traveled “sixty miles” to the coast. Staying almost 2 weeks, Father Apolonario traded 2 horses, a “flagon” of wine, and some dried fruit for some of the goods on board the *Lelia Byrd*. The horses, a stallion and mare, were obtained 19 May 1803 “as a present to the King of the Sandwich Islands” (Cleveland 1842:221). Shaler and Cleveland had previously attempted to obtain horses at other missions, probably from padres they encountered while at San Quintín. Sailing south to “Cape St. Lucas” (Cabo San Lucas), they anchored in the bay of St. Joseph, called “Puerto Segura” by Shaler (1935:71), and again traded with local padres for

such provision, vegetables, and fruits, as the place afforded. . . . In addition to a supply of stores, we purchased of them pearls to the amount of two thousand dollars, and also a mare with foal. Having with much difficulty taken the latter on board, on the 28th of May [1803], we sailed immediately for the Sandwich Islands. (Cleveland 1842:225)

HAWAII AND KING KAMEHAMEHA I, “THE GREAT”

Cleveland visited the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands twice: once in July 1799 as captain of the *Caroline*, and once in June 1803 as supercargo aboard the *Lelia Byrd* with Shaler (Cleveland 1842:96–98, 228–234). Shaler was also in Hawaii twice, both times as captain of the *Lelia Byrd*: once in June 1803, and again in August–September 1805 (Shaler 1935:78–108). Because Shaler’s 1808 account (Shaler 1935) covers only the period from 1804 to 1805 when he was aboard the *Lelia Byrd* without Cleveland, Shaler’s and Cleveland’s accounts do not overlap, except once when Shaler states in passing that he brought horses to the Hawaiian Islands (Shaler 1935:88).

Cleveland briefly describes his 1799 visit to the islands of “Owhyhee” and “Mowee.” He remarks on the islanders’ expert swimming, their ability to dive for extended periods, and he describes their general characteristics, stating that they have the advantage of

size, shape, and gracefulness of their persons, and . . . [an] open, laughing, generous, and animated expression of their countenances. The characteristics of these islanders are activity, gayety, volatility, and irritability; . . . (Cleveland 1842:97)

Shaler (1935:90) describes the Hawaiians as large and robust, and he states that many of the women are “perfectly beautiful,” with “the finest eyes in the world.”

In their dispositions they are brave, generous, humane, and affectionate; they are possessed of great sensibility, and will go any lengths to serve those

they think their friends, but revolt at every species of neglect or ill treatment. These amiable people have been stigmatized as being the greatest thieves in the world, but experience has given me an opportunity of knowing the malicious charge is unjust. . . . I was among them nearly three months, and, probably, in a more exposed situation than any other person ever was, and I do not think I lost by thefts the value of two dollars. (Shaler 1935:90)

Cleveland's 1803 description of the Sandwich Islands is detailed. The extent of planning that went into this visit is clearly shown by their attempts to obtain horses prior to reaching the islands. It is apparent that they intended to make a favorable impression on King Kamehameha. Reaching Hawaii on 21 June 1803, they landed and on 23 June met John Young, Viceroy of "Owhyhee" (island of Hawaii), leaving with him the "mare with foal" as Young professed knowledge in the treatment of horses and promised to care for the animal. Of this animal, Cleveland (1842:229) writes, "This was the first horse that ever trod the soil of Owhyhee, and caused, amongst the natives, incessant exclamations of astonishment."

Shaler provides a description of animals observed on the Hawaiian Islands during his 1805 voyage, stating,

These islands were very poor in animals: the hog, dog, and rat were the only species of quadrupeds known there; their dog seems to be a degenerate species, resembling the fox, with erect ears; it is eaten by them, and is very delicate food. Foreigners have also greatly increased their stock of animals: at present, they have large herds of cattle, sheep, and goats, and I brought them a breed of horses from California. (Shaler 1935:87–88)

In late June 1803, after leaving the "mare with foal" with John Young, Shaler and Cleveland discovered that the "king and his principal men were at Mowee." Departing the Island of "Owhyhee" with the remaining 2 horses, Shaler and Cleveland sailed for the village of Lahaina on Maui, where they met another European, Isaac Davis.

Soon after, a double canoe was seen coming towards us; and, on arrival alongside, a large, athletic man, nearly naked, jumped on board, who was introduced, by Davis, as Tamaahmaah, the great King.

The horses were landed safely, and in perfect health, the same day, and gave evidence, by the gambols, of their satisfaction at being again on *terra firma*. They were then presented to the King, who was told, that one had been also left at Owhyhee for him. He expressed his thanks, but did not seem to comprehend their value. (Cleveland 1842: 230–231)

Cleveland noted the seemingly preoccupied King Kamehameha, who took only "a very careless look . . . [at] the horses." It is likely that the effort made

by Shaler and Cleveland to bring the horses as a gift and their ultimate value was not immediately understood by the king. As such, Cleveland did not appear overly impressed with "Tamaahmaah," although he states,

At the time of our acquaintance with Tamaahmaah, he was a perfect savage, but evidently destined by nature, both physically and mentally, to be a chief. His mind was of a superior caste; . . . (Cleveland 1842:233)

During his August–September 1805 visit to Hawaii, Shaler met extensively with King "Tamaihamaiha," who he obviously thought more highly of than did Cleveland in 1803. Shaler writes,

Tamaihamaiha is a tall, fine proportioned man, and of most prodigious strength and activity: he far excels all his subjects in all their manual exercises. His features are strong and harsh at the first appearance; but his physiognomy softens very much on acquaintance. He is a man of great natural abilities; he is very polite in his government, and extremely popular; and, if he had had the advantages of education, would have been truly a great man. (Shaler 1935:82)

Through acts such as sparing his enemies, treating competitors with kindness and respect due their rank, restoring estates to those he had vanquished, and punishing other chiefs for flagrant acts of injustice, Shaler (1935:83) explains, Kamehameha had "unbounded popularity with the common people." At the time of Shaler's 1805 visit, King Kamehameha was attempting to rule all the Hawaiian Islands and had a fleet of about 30 vessels "of from twenty to sixty tons burthen" and "about thirty pieces of iron cannon, 1000 muskets, and a considerable quantity of powder and ball" (Shaler 1935:84–85). During his brief stay in Hawaii, Shaler established a friendship with King Kamehameha:

By treating Tamaihamaiha with candor and respect, I entirely gained his good will. . . . I very frequently had long conversations with him on the affairs of his government, in which I gave him the best advice in my power. (Shaler 1935:102)

Shaler developed such a trusted relationship with Kamehameha that the king asked Shaler to temporarily act as his ambassador. To this end, Shaler relayed the king's terms for peace to a neighboring chief in an effort to unify Hawaii under Kamehameha's rule (Shaler 1935:105–108).

FATE OF THE *LELIA BYRD*

After Shaler and his crew left Catalina Island (12 June 1805), where the ship had been repaired, the *Lelia Byrd* did not leak as badly as before. However, Shaler's plan was to trade the vessel to Kamehameha and to proceed to Canton, China, in the *Huron* with his furs.

I hoped to make an exchange of my old ship for one of his small vessels, which it was my intention to send back to the [California] coast with the remainder of my cargo, under the direction of Mr. Hudson, a young gentleman who had been long my companion and assistant. I arrived at Whahoo the 1st of September. . . .

Tamaihamaiha offered me my choice of all his vessels in exchange for my ship, and promised to equip the one I should choose in the best manner in his power. I accordingly made choice of a new schooner, of about forty-five tons burthen, then on the stocks, which he agreed to finish, with the assistance of my carpenters and men, and what he could not furnish himself to complete here was to be taken from the ship. Tamaihamaiha was very much flattered by the confidence I placed in him, and assured me that I should have no just cause to repent it. (Shaler 1935:100–101)

Shaler offers no further information about the *Lelia Byrd* or the new schooner, although Cleveland (1842:246) states that the schooner was named *Queen Tamana* and was captained by John T. Hudson. Cleveland would have had to learn this information later, and it is likely that Cleveland and Shaler discussed the fate of the *Lelia Byrd* long after their voyages.

Although not mentioned by Shaler in his 1808 account, Cleveland (1842:244) mentions that a few weeks after Shaler's 1 May 1804 arrival on the northwest coast of America, the *Lelia Byrd* "struck on a shoal, and beat so heavily, before getting off, as to cause her to leak alarmingly." This was undoubtedly the primary reason for careening the ship at Port Roussillon on Catalina Island.

The repairs they were able to make, were done in so imperfect a manner, as would have made it unjustifiable to attempt any other passage, than one where they might presume on good weather and a fair wind all the way. . . . (Cleveland 1842:245)

In other words, the *Lelia Byrd* was so badly damaged that in Shaler's estimation it was no longer dependable, which is why he traded the vessel to Kamehameha. Concerning what became of the *Lelia Byrd*, a brief passage from Cleveland's account (1842:247) is all that is known:

The *Lelia Byrd* was repaired by the King and made two or three voyages to China, with sandal-wood. At length, worn out, and after being for a time a receiving ship for opium, she was broken up or sunk at Wampoa [near Canton].