



THE POPPY PAPER



Official Monthly Publication of the
Boosters of Old Town San Diego State Historic Park
A Non-Profit Organization

February 2017

California Textiles in San Diego

By Susan M. Hector, BOOT Board Member



It is an unfortunate fact that cloth – fibers, textiles, and fabric – are poorly preserved and, thus, not well represented in the archaeological and historical record. Although some areas, such as New Mexico, have collections of historic period textiles dating back centuries, here in San Diego we do not have any preserved textiles from the early historic period. I decided to look at records and documents related to Mission San Diego de Alcalá to help me understand the types of fabric and textiles produced and used in Old Town San Diego during the Californio period, roughly spanning the time from Mexican independence to territorial control by the United States (1821 – 1848). It is my hope that this information will support living history interpretation and programs.

Workshops for textile production were located at every mission, since each was intended to be self-sufficient. Weaver Antonio Henrique taught weaving to the neophytes throughout the California mission system and his Native wife taught the Native American women and girls how to spin (Schuetz-Miller 1994: 187). Beginning at Mission San Diego, she taught carding, spinning, and weaving at the southern Missions (Webb 1952: 210). Henrique made spinning wheels, warping frames, looms and combs; and he taught the weaving of woolen cloth at the Native mission workshops (Engelhardt 1920: 147). According to Engelhardt, he taught the neophytes how to weave different types of woolen cloth, including “Sayal Franciscano,” a coarse fabric worn by the missionaries (and probably the native people). In a report from 1797, the mission in San Juan Capistrano reported that the native women pick and spin wool and cotton.

Seeds for plant fibers – hemp, flax, and cotton – were planted at the California missions as part of their agricultural program. Royal orders were issued in 1793 for hemp to be grown to support shipbuilding in New Spain. The hemp fiber would be made into rope for rigging. This was most successful at the southern missions. In 1810, Mission San Diego shipped 44,781 pounds of hemp fiber to New Spain for rope manufacturing; however, after this year, neither the funds nor ships were available to carry the resource (Archibald 1978: 120).

Cotton was grown in San Diego, as well. The mission started growing cotton in 1819, but that year was a poor yield. In 1820 conditions improved and 14 *arrobas* (approximately 350 pounds) were harvested (Archibald 1978: 175). According to M. Duflot de Mofras, attaché of the French legation to Mexico from 1841-42, “The cotton raised is of a superior quality, but men are wanting to cultivate it...” (Engelhardt 1920: 244). As will be discussed below, the cotton harvest was stored at the mission at the time of secularization.

But, the major textile production was in wool. The importation of Churro sheep into San Diego for use by the mission community was part of the Spanish strategy of establishing independent settlements that would expand and support the Spanish empire. Since the Churro sheep and their history has been discussed previously (Hector 2015), this information will not be repeated. Engelhardt (1920: 244) noted that at one time the mission had 32,000 sheep grazing on their lands.

Most of the Churro fleece was used in its natural colors of black, white, brown, gray, and tan. The missions also imported dyes from the port of San Blas, which was a hub for moving goods from New Spain into Alta California until 1810; after

Continued on page 5...

2017 Summer Interpretative Special Events

By Gregg Giacomuzzi, State Park Interpreter I

James E. Birch organized and financed the first overland stage and mail service in 1857 from San Antonio, Texas to San Diego, California. The line itself only lasted four years, but resulted in connecting the Eastern United States with the West Coast. As a result of this significant historical event, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park has been commemorating it with a series of living history activities and events throughout the summer for the last 10 years.

The events have grown in popularity with park visitors, with many returning year after year to enjoy their favorite activity or event. However, we need your help to provide the 1800's activities, demonstrations, music and dance that help the visitors step back in time to enjoy a glimpse into early San Diego.

We have funding for the events from the Boosters of Old Town (BOOT), California State Parks, and a grant from the County of San Diego, as well as Fiestas de Reyes for supplies, labor, advertising, and event participation. The Mormon Battalion Historic Site is also providing significant assistance with the event setup, take down and volunteers. Volunteer Coordinator Tim Downing or myself will be calling Old Town San Diego State Historic Park volunteers, in the next few months seeking your participation.

<u>July Events</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>August Special Events</u>	<u>Date</u>
July 4 th	July 4		
Games and Amusements	July 8	Trades that Shaped the West	August 5
Women of the West	July 15	Days of the Vaquero	August 12
Taste of the Past	July 22	Twainfest	August 19
Soldiers and Citizens	July 29	The West on the Move	August 26

The Descendants of Early San Diego

In cooperation with Write Out Loud and in association with Playwrights Project, The Descendants announce a Script Writing Project. We are soliciting submissions of short monologues for presentation, specifically for TwainFest, to be held at Old Town San Diego State Park annually in August.

For more information, please visit the Descendants web site at <http://descendantsearlysandiego.weebly.com> or facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Descendants-of-Early-San-Diego-474183452627096>

From the Editor's Desk...

Now that everybody has their holiday decorations packed away, it's time to get the taxes done! And, speaking of taxes, Treasurer Deanna Turton did a great job consolidating two months of financial information into one piece (page 3), while getting all of the year-end data together in preparation for tax time.

BOOT Board Member Susan Hector's front page article highlights her extensive research into textiles in early San Diego. You will hear more from Susan next month!

Park Staff members are already preparing for the summer months, and volunteers are looking forward to the great opportunities to participate in the planned events. Thanks to Gregg Giacomuzzi for giving us a "heads up" on the dates to mark on our calendars (above). We will keep you informed with more details!

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to Tim Downing for the great tribute to Frank Van Wormer. Our blacksmiths and mountainmen are surely missing him and his dedication to their groups. It is the caring, giving, and sharing talents of volunteers like Frank that make Old Town San Diego so special!

Happy Valentine's Day, Presidents' Days, and Happy Reading!

Ruth French, Editor, popypapereditor@gmail.com

(Deadline for submissions is the 20th of each month for inclusion in the following month's issue.)



Treasurer's Notes

by Deanna Turton

Since I diverted from my usual article last month, I will combine the financial activity for BOOT for November and December in this issue of the Poppy Paper. It was quite a hectic time where I wrote over \$28,418.00 in checks for both months!!! So, I think Poppy Paper readers will find it interesting where all that money went!!!

Spending categories over \$300 were:

- \$4,316.00 - State Park Staff Salaries - Stagecoach Days
- \$4,000.00 - Blacksmith and Burro Handler (annual contribution for many years)
- \$3,289.00 - *Threads of the Past* New Floor (November)
- \$2,709.25 (December)
- \$1,808.62 - *The Park Store* (November)
- \$ 709.50 (December)
- \$1,239.00 - Board of Equalization (4th quarter sales taxes)
- \$ 909.01 - Period Attire Bank (November)
- \$1,946.59 (December)
- \$ 658.00 - School Tours (funds from the 2015 Wells Fargo grant)
- \$ 480.00 - *Soap Guild*
- \$ 342.00 - Fumigation of the BOOT Shed
- \$ 317.35 - Burros (care in December)

Plus 21 funding categories in November and 15 in December that were under \$300.

It is not unusual for end-of-year expenses to be “heavier” than usual because folks either like to use up their budgets **OR** they remember to turn in receipts and funding requests before the end of the year.

Now, to the good news...In November, BOOT received additions to the checkbook of \$4,307.21 from the *Round It Up America* program, which Chuck Ross promotes at his restaurant. These funds will pay park aide salaries in the *Mason Street School* for three days a week. The remaining *Round It Up America* funds earned in 2016 will be used for Living History expenses in 2017. In December, Mr. Ross also wrote BOOT a \$3,017.00 check, which was combined with \$1,299.00 from BOOT, for a total \$4,316.00 for park aide salaries during Stagecoach Days (mentioned above).

And finally, part of the funds that BOOT used to pay for the new floor in *Threads* was donated by Volunteer Patt Seitas, as well as donations received from the *Quilt Guild*. So, similarly, the checks mentioned above, contained funds contributed to BOOT from several sources, as well as monies from BOOT itself.

Now that the year has ended, it is time to do the year-end balancing, tax forms and annual report. With all the rainy days expected this winter, sitting at the computer with a hot cup of tea, will make the task easier, as I will not be distracted by working in the garden.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

BOOT Board Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesday, 1:00 pm, at Café Coyote. Monthly Board Meetings are always open to the public. If you would like to speak and/or present a project, please contact the BOOT Secretary (see page 7).

Craft Committee meets the 2nd Friday, 9:00 am to Noon. The next Craft Day will be Feb. 10th.

The Old Town Native Plant Landscape maintenance work party is the 2nd Saturday, 9:30 to Noon.

Questions: Contact Peter and Kay at oldtownlandscape@cnpsd.org

VOLUNTEERS IN THE PARK

*By Tim Downing
Senior Park Aide / Volunteer Coordinator*



Frank Van Wormer and Brian Carper

It is with sadness that I report that Frank Van Wormer, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park's oldest volunteer, passed away on December 26, 2016. Frank was 93 years old and had been a volunteer blacksmith for 10 years.

Frank Linn Van Wormer was born March 12, 1923, in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, and grew up in the area around and in Craig, Missouri. In 1929 he began attending Craig School, then Consolidated School and Belleview School, and graduated from Craig High School in 1941. Frank maintained close ties to his childhood community all his life, and in his later years made an annual pilgrimage to Craig for high school reunions and to visit with classmates, teachers, relatives and friends.

In 1943, Frank rode out to California with his brother in law's parents, and lived with an uncle and aunt in Los Angeles for a year. Looking for work during the war years, he came to the San Diego area and worked at Solar Aircraft. He also worked in an auto body shop and uncharacteristically – as a teller in a bank where he met Anna Lee Rogers.

Frank and Ann married on December 22, 1945 and had two children – Stephen and Jill. In 1959 he and Ann bought a lot in National City. Over the next year, with the help of his nephew, B. Helfers, he built a new home for his family. They moved in on July 1, 1960. He and Ann lived there for the rest of their lives.

Frank's hobbies included an interest in old farm machinery, Model T Fords (he owned two), camping and fishing, historical reenacting at the blacksmith shop in Old Town San Diego, and local mountain man rendezvous events. He participated in family events, including the school and professional functions of his six grandchildren.

Frank was predeceased by his wife Ann in 2008. He is survived by his son, Stephen R. Van Wormer and wife Susan D. Walter; his daughter, Jill L. Van Wormer; his sisters, Esther Helfers and Dorothy Lovelady; as well as many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

Pictured (right): Roselle Walter, Frank Van Wormer, Susan Walter, Steve Van Wormer, and Rachael Van Wormer. (Roselle was Susan's mother; Rachael is Susan and Steve's daughter.)



Boosters of Old Town San Diego extends our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Frank Van Wormer. His contributions to Old Town San Diego State Historic Park will be forever cherished and greatly missed.

that date, and the withdrawal of the Spanish government from California, the port was closed and other means were used to transport goods (Archibald 1978).

The imported dyes were brazilwood (wine red), campeche/logwood (purple and black), and zacatascal (yellow) (Bancroft 1963: 658). Indigo (blue) was identified in numerous invoices to the missions (Webb 1952: 213-214). Zacatascal is *Cuscuta* spp., a type of parasitic dodder from Mexico. It is also called “zacatlaxcalli” and produces a yellow dye. Many species of dodder have been used historically as a dye plant, usually with alum as the mordant (Shibayama et al. n.d.). Local wildflowers were also used by the mission dyers, most likely to produce yellow or a pale color. Cochineal (red) may have been used, although it was a very expensive dye and was strictly controlled by the Spanish government. Brazilwood was a much more economical red dye to use.

Many of the padres preferred to wear imported cloth, and did not like to wear the fabric produced by the missions (Archibald 1978: 129); this preference is evident in the mission inventory. The native neophytes and gentiles wore most of the wool fabric produced, and perhaps suffered because of it. Due to a lack of water and ability to clean and launder clothing, the wool fabric was rarely washed. In 1816, one missionary blamed the filthy wool clothing for the high mortality of the native population (Archibald 1978: 157). Fabric and textiles were given to the native people as gifts for conversion or baptism, although these items were often returned in disgust over the insistence by the padres to wear European style clothing (Duggan 2000).

When the Mexican government decided to close the missions and turn their land holdings into private ranches, the churches were required to prepare inventories of their possessions so they could be sold. At secularization (1834), Mission San Diego’s inventory cited 6 looms (2 identified as useless), 16 spinning wheels, 12 pairs of cards, and 3 combs (two for flax and one for blankets) (Engelhardt 1920: 341; Webb 1952: 210). The inventory also includes an extensive list of textiles. A close look at this inventory provides important information about how fabric was produced and used at the mission.¹

The first inventory is dated September 20, 1834, and covers items in the mission church (Engelhardt 1920: 335 – 339). As might be expected, the list includes vestments and ritual clothing used by the priests. What might surprise you is the large number of these items, which include garments made from satin, damask, velvet, fine woven tissue, lace, braid of silver and gold threads, and embroidery. Many of these were made of silk, and were dark red, white, black, green, and purple in color. Other items were made of striped dimity, chambray, muslin, and a currently unknown fabric called *islanda*, which is probably a type of cotton. Curtains, towels, and altar cloths were also listed, including four curtains made of printed cotton from India and referred to as “very fine and new.”

In New Spain, the church was a major consumer of imported fabrics such as velvet, damask, satin, and brocades, using these rich fabrics, not only for their vestments, but for ceremonial church coverings (Phipps 2014). Printed cotton fabric from India was imported to New Spain by the Manila galleons during the 16th through the 18th centuries (Benson 2008; Fisher 1994: 125; Phipps 2014). These were referred to as *Indiana* or *Indianillas*. Madder (red) and indigo were used in India to produce the block printed colors on these fabrics. There was some production of printed cotton fabric in Mexico, where cochineal was used instead of madder (Phipps 2014: 10 – 11). It was certainly less expensive to do the printing in Mexico than to import the printed cotton from India. The Santa Barbara Presidio community, for example, received printed cottons from Mexico when they requested *Indiana* cloth (Perissinoto 1998).

Of most interest to my research was the list of items from the San Diego mission warehouse, inventoried on September 25, 1834. This list is likely to contain items made at the mission for everyday use and for clothing the neophytes. From the beginning of the mission system, they supplied clothing and fabric for the local native population, both to preserve modesty and as gifts (Duggan 2000).

Some of the fabric stored in the warehouse consisted of luxury yardage, presumably for making priests’ clothing and church goods. These fabrics are *sangaleta*, which is a silk fabric with patterned weft designs, and *Indiana* cotton, printed with large flowers. The inventory listed 18.5 varas of *Indiana* (over 16 meters) and 29 varas of *sangaleta* (over 24 meters). That is a lot of fabric, and very costly fabric, at that. In addition to these items, the inventory listed another 14 varas of fine *Indiana* (almost 12 meters). There were 22 varas of scrap *Indiana* as well. Clearly this yardage was intended for construction of clothing and furnishings, since 23 copper thimbles, buttons large and small, and sewing thread was also listed.

¹ Various sources were used to identify and translate the inventory items. Engelhardt noted that the handwriting and illiteracy of the scribe who noted the items resulted in misspellings. Sources included Fisher 1994; Ponce de Leon 1910; and Wheat 1994; thank you to Larry Felton, who did substantial research to identify *sangaleta*.

Of particular interest in the inventory is this entry: 19 pounds pita floja.

This is *ixtle*, which is plant fiber (*Aechmea magdalenae*) used as warp for Saltillo serapes (Wheat 1994: 58). Agave fiber is sometimes used as a substitute for the bromeliad. In this form, it is sometimes referred to as henequen. Although I am tempted to suggest that perhaps local agave fibers, which were spun by the Kumeyaay as part of their traditional fiber technology, were used for this item, I doubt that they were. Pita floja is listed many times in the requisitions and invoices associated with the Santa Barbara Presidio community (Perissinotto 1998). Therefore, I have concluded that this material was imported from Mexico. But, what of the association with Saltillo serapes? I can only conclude that, both in San Diego and at Santa Barbara, weavers were using the preferred *ixtle* for a traditional warp and were weaving serapes with yarn spun from local wool as weft.

Another item of interest to me was bulk cotton, listed as: 25 arrobas algodón.

This bulk cotton was stored in the textile shop with the spinning wheels, carders, and looms (Engelhardt 1920: 341). We do not know if this cotton, which was grown in mission fields, was for internal production or export like the hemp fibers. An arroba is approximately 25 pounds, so that is 625 pounds of cotton. It takes less than a pound of cotton to make a shirt, so based on my experience growing, spinning and weaving cotton, that's a lot of cotton – plenty to spin and weave at the mission and to trade.

The same type of spindle wheel used for wool at the missions could have also been used to spin cotton. The same looms could also be used. It is possible that cotton yarn was prepared for use in weft for blankets, with the wool yarn used for warp. This would have produced a lighter weight blanket, more suitable for San Diego's weather.

I eliminated the imported luxury fabrics that were stored in the warehouse from consideration, since they were not made at the San Diego mission. This left a relatively small group of items. I suggest that the following are the textiles that could have been made at the mission²:

- 2 piezas (2 bolts of 20 meters) of blue manta (fabric for a cloak or blanket)
- 3 piezas (3 bolts of 20 meters) of plain white manta
- 18 varas (15 meters) of plain white manta
- 21.5 varas (18 meters) of plain white manta
- 13 varas (11 meters) of blue manta
- 1 vara (0.84 meter) of rotten blue cloth
- 173 blankets
- 3 piezas (3 bolts of 20 meters) of bayeta (a term used in general for loosely woven wool fabric; not necessarily baize, which is a flannel)
- 1 pieza (1 bolt of 20 meters) of jerga (crudely woven fabric, often used as floor covering but also outer clothing)



Manta would have been an easy fabric to produce at the mission. It is a plain woven wool, not fine, and used both as clothing and for blankets (as the saying goes, clothing by day, bed by night). Daily clothing for both priests, monks, and neophytes was made out of manta cloth. The question is, was it woven at the mission in these lengths? A pieza or bolt of fabric was a length of approximately 20 meters. Would a mission period loom be capable of holding a warp of 22 meters (20 meters of fabric plus approximately 2 meters of waste beyond the woven fabric). As a weaver myself, and having seen the large floor looms used in New Mexico, I know that a 20 meter warp is not unusual, if a warping reel is used to wind the yarn. A fast weaver can easily produce a meter of fabric a day. So it is possible that these lengths were made at the mission.

(Photos courtesy of Susan Hector: Reproduction California-period Spinning Wheel at Old Town San Diego State Historic Park (page 1); California-style wool rebozos woven by Susan Hector (above).

² A vara is 0.84 meter and a pieza was a standard bolt of whole fabric measuring approximately 18 – 20 varas, estimated here as 20 meters.

To be continued next month...

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS!





Cold Stone in Old Town San Diego

619-543-9057

Jeanne Ferrell

Cell: (619) 995-0787

2448 San Diego Avenue
San Diego, CA 92110

coldstoneotsd@yahoo.com



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are the gems
of Old Town!*

- Thank you for all that you do for our community -

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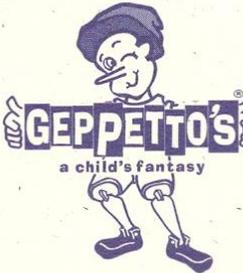


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Poppy Paper	Ruth French
Editor:	poppypapereditor@gmail.com
BOOT Website:	http://boostersofoldtown.com/
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