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THE COASTS OF LOWER  
CALIFORNIA AND MEXICO**

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**GEORGE DEWEY**

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No. 56.

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REMARKS

ON THE

COASTS OF LOWER CALIFORNIA AND MEXICO,

BY

COMMANDER GEORGE DEWEY,  
UNITED STATES NAVY.

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WASHINGTON:  
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1874.

## FROM SAN DIEGO TO LA PAZ.

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The entire coast of Lower California, from the boundary-line to La Paz, with the exception of San Lucas bay and the valleys of Todos Santos and San José del Cabo, is barren in the extreme. The land is generally high and precipitous and its approaches bold. There are many places where a ship may anchor and find some protection from the prevailing coast-wind. General description of coast.

During the summer months, strong southeast gales of short duration are frequent in the vicinity of cape San Lucas, but rarely extend so far north as Cedros island. During the months of June, July, August, and September, the winds were from the northward and westward on the Pacific coast of the peninsula. The nights were ordinarily calm, with heavy dews. The breeze would spring up from the westward about 9 a. m., hauling gradually to the northward as the day advanced, and attaining its greatest force about 3 p. m. Occasionally we had light southerly winds; but the prevailing winds were from the northward and westward. Winds.

In the gulf of California, during the latter part of May and the first of June, the winds were light from the southward and the weather pleasant.

Between San Diego and Cedros island, during the month of September, the weather was misty and foggy in the night, clearing up every morning about 10 a. m., and the remainder of the day clear and pleasant. After leaving Cedros island, there was a marked change in the weather; much less fog, the mornings clearing earlier, the temperature lower, and the winds lighter. Weather.

We were near the land and within the influence of the regular tides, instead of the current which is encountered farther off shore. The tides are influenced by the prevailing wind, and set from one-quarter to three-quarters of a Currents.

knot per hour. We experienced a strong current setting to the eastward around cape San Lucas.

**Boundary.** The boundary-line between the United States and Mexico is marked by a monument of white marble, standing on a low table-land about 300 yards from the beach.

**Coronados islets.** The Coronados islets are barren rocks of trap formation, about seven miles from the coast, extending in a northwest and southeast direction, about five miles. The southernmost is the largest, two and a half miles long, and its highest peak is about 800 feet high. The southeastern extremity of the islet bears S. 20° 30' W. from the monument, and is an excellent land-mark in making San Diego. From the monument to Descanso point, sixteen miles, the coast trends S. 29° E., and is generally bluff, from 50 to 80 feet high, with a range of hills about 500 feet high a few miles inland, and a range of mountains back of them. One of these, called Table mountain, is 2,500 feet high, and remarkable, and another, a triple-peaked mountain a few miles south, is 2,700 feet high.

**Monument to Descanso point.**

To the southward of Descanso point the land recedes somewhat, forming Descanso bay. Sugar-loaf rock bears S. 54° 30' E. from Descanso point. It is a small low rock about 15 feet high, and apparently the only danger to be apprehended in the bay.

**Anchorage.**

There is an anchorage to the southward of the rock often used by the small coasters.

**Descanso point to point Sal-si-Puedes.**

From Descanso point to point Sal-si-Puedes, sixteen miles S. 39° E., the coast is generally sandy, with an occasional rocky cliff, and mountains rising a short distance inland.

Soundings taken three miles from land gave no bottom at forty fathoms.

**Todos Santos islands.**

From point Sal-si-Puedes to Todos Santos islands is S. 28° E. 13 miles. These islets extend about two miles in a northwest and southeast direction. The western one is about one mile in length, east and west, a quarter of a mile wide, and from 30 to 60 feet high; the eastern one about the same length, northwest and southeast, half a mile wide, and 250 feet high. Both are surrounded by detached rocks and kelp; there is a boat-passage between them.

**Point Sal-si-Puedes to cape San Miguel.**

From point Sal-si-Puedes to cape San Miguel, S. 54° 30' E. 12 miles, the coast is of sand bluffs and rocky cliffs

about 50 feet high, with high hills just back, and the mountain range a few miles inland, but presenting the appearance, to one a few miles at sea, of being immediately on the coast.

Cape San Miguel, the northern limit of Todos Santos bay, is high and bold.

From cape San Miguel to Encenada point, S. 81° 30' E. <sup>Cape San Miguel to Encenada point.</sup> 5½ miles, the coast is bold, with cliffs from 50 to 200 feet high. There is a large field of kelp near Encenada point, with sixteen fathoms of water at its southern end.

From Encenada point, which is 370 feet high, the coast <sup>Anchorage.</sup> recedes considerably to the northward and eastward, forming a snug anchorage, where vessels may anchor in from three to seven fathoms, sandy bottom, perfectly sheltered from all winds, except those from the southwest.

The observation-spot was at the west end of the sand- <sup>Observation spot.</sup> beach, where it joins the bluffs of Encenada point, (see plan of the anchorage.) From this point the land sweeps around to the southward and westward to point Banda, which is eight and a half miles distant, and is the southern limit of Todos Santos bay. The land at the bottom of the bay is low and sandy, and the soundings, at the distance of one mile, from three to five fathoms.

Point Banda is high, the highest peak being 500 feet, <sup>Banda point.</sup> with outlying rocks extending three-fourths of a mile in a northwesterly direction.

There is a whaling-station about three miles to the eastward of the point, in the bay, with a good anchorage sheltered from all winds, except those from the westward. <sup>Anchorage.</sup>

The channel between point Banda and Todos Santos <sup>Channel.</sup> islands is about three miles wide and free from all dangers, except the outlying rocks off point Banda mentioned above.

From point Banda to point Soledad, S. 41° 15', E. 12 <sup>Banda point to point Soledad.</sup> miles, the coast is high and precipitous, with deep water close to. Point Soledad is low and rocky, rising abruptly to a height of 500 feet.

Soledad rocks, one mile west of the point, are of small extent. They are 20 feet high, and are surrounded by kelp. There is a clear passage between them and the point, <sup>Passage.</sup> keeping clear of the kelp on both sides.



- Anchorage.** To the southward of the point, near two houses, there is good anchorage in from 8 to 10 fathoms, sheltered from the coast wind.
- Point. Soledad to cape Colnett.** From point Soledad to cape Colnett is S. 35° E. 41 $\frac{3}{10}$  miles. The coast recedes somewhat between the two points and is generally low, rising rapidly inland.
- Cape Colnett is a remarkable headland, nearly semicircular in form, with perpendicular cliffs from 100 to 350 feet high, of a dark-colored rock, (nearly black,) on a bed of light sandstone, the coast retaining the same appearance for about 10 miles to the northward. The cape bearing ENE., distant 7 miles, shows dark with yellow sand beyond.
- Anchorage.** From cape Colnett the coast trends to the northward and eastward for a short distance, forming Colnett bay, where good anchorage may be found in from 6 to 8 fathoms, sandy bottom, sheltered from northerly winds.
- Cape Colnett to San Martin's island.** From cape Colnett to the eastern end of San Martin's island is S. 38° 15' E. 30 miles. For about ten miles to the southward of the cape the coast is lower than above, with shoal water and numerous fields of kelp making off three or four miles from the land. Thence to San Martin's island the coast is low and sandy, the water shoal as above, but as far as we could see with no outlying dangers.
- San Ramon bay.** Four miles to the northward of San Martin's island is the bay of San Ramon, formed by a slight indentation in the coast-line, which is here of low sand-hills from 50 to 100 feet high. At the southern extremity of this bay, extending two and a half miles, is a remarkable perpendicular cliff of dark rock from 150 to 200 feet high.
- Channel.** Two miles and a half west of this cliff is San Martin's island, with a clear passage between them carrying from 10 to 15 fathoms, apparently free from all dangers.
- San Martin's island.** San Martin's island is of volcanic origin, nearly circular in form, with its greatest diameter extending two miles in an east and west direction. It is quite barren, producing nothing but the prickly pear, and a little stunted bush growing among the rocks.
- The highest peak is 400 feet and is the crater of an extinct volcano, its diameter being 350 feet and its depth about 40 feet.

There is a good anchorage on the southeast side of the island, off the mouth of a small lagoon; and a better one on the northeast side in a snug little cove, which we have named Hassler cove, where a ship may anchor in 8 or 9 fathoms protected from all winds except those from the north. The eastern side of the cove is formed by huge bowlders which extend off to the northward, making an excellent breakwater.

Anchorage.

Beuo rock lies S. 1° 30' W.  $3\frac{3}{8}$  miles from the eastern end of San Martin's island. It has from 9 to 12 feet of water on it with 5 fathoms close to, and no bottom at 17 fathoms, 400 yards from it. The sea does not break on it in moderate weather.

Beuo rock.

From the east end of San Martin's island to Reef point is S. 46° E.  $8\frac{3}{8}$  miles. The coast between is formed of low sand-hills except at about five miles to the northward of the point where one of the "Five Hills" borders directly on the sea.

San Martin's  
island to Reef  
point.

From Reef point to cape San Quentin, S. 80° E.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, the coast is low and rocky with numerous projecting points and outlying rocks over which the sea breaks heavily.

Reef point to  
cape San Quen-  
tin.

Afuera point is an outlying rock near cape San Quentin, and is the southernmost point. Mount Mayo, the highest part of the cape, is 210 feet in height, and is in the center of the peninsula forming the western side of port San Quentin.

Entrada point is low and rocky, but may be approached to within a quarter of a mile.

The land about port San Quentin (see plan) is low and sandy, and entirely without vegetation. The five remarkably placed mountains of volcanic origin, on the north side of the bay, caused one of the early navigators to call this the "bay of Five Hills."

Port San Quen-  
tin.

These mountains are from 800 to 1,100 feet high, except the western one, previously mentioned, which has an altitude of 460 feet.

Five Hills.

No vessel drawing over 12 feet should attempt to enter this bay without either buoying the channel or sending a boat ahead, as the channel usually shifts with every south-east gale, and is narrow and tortuous with not over three fathoms on the bar. For small vessels it is a most excellent harbor, affording perfect protection from every wind.

Directions.

To enter the port, steer for Entrada point, (the last rocky point passed in entering,) giving it a berth of a quarter

of a mile; then steer NW. about 800 yards, until you pass a sandspit making out between Entrada and Sextant points; then head up for the latter point W. by N., passing it close to, as the channel at this place is very narrow.

Sextant point is low and sandy. After passing it, follow the shore-line, and anchor in 5 or 6 fathoms half a mile inside the point.

**Cape San Quentin to point Baja.** The coast about the bay and for ten miles to the southward is low and sandy, with high hills a short distance inland. The land then becomes higher for a few miles and of a dark color, decreasing in height again gradually until it reaches point Baja, a low sand-cliff S. 31° 30' E., 25½ miles from cape San Quentin.

There is a reef and line of kelp extending for a short distance to the southward from point Baja, and vessels entering the bay of Rosario should give it a good berth.

**Bay of Rosario.** South of point Baja the land recedes considerably, forming the bay of Rosario, where vessels may find protection from the coast-winds. The country about the head of the bay near point Baja is fertile and cultivated, and supplies of vegetables, fresh beef, and water may be obtained there. The old mission of Rosario is a few miles inland.

**Point Baja to point San Antonio.** From point Baja to point San Antonio S. 40° E. 14 miles, the coast is of sand-bluffs, from 50 to 100 feet in height, with high hills and table-lands a short distance inland.

**San Gerónimo island.** From point Baja to San Gerónimo island is S. 22° 30' E. 9½ miles. The island is about a mile in length, NNE. and SSW., and a third of a mile wide. Seen from the northward it shows three hills of moderate elevation, the highest 150 feet, and it is low at both ends. The island is of sand-stone formation, and is covered in many places with a mixture of sand and guano. It is surrounded by kelp and outlying rocks, except on the southeast side at the foot of the highest peak, where there is a small shingle-beach.

**Channel.** There is a passage about four miles in width between the island and the mainland; but it should not be used, except in cases of great emergency, as kelp covers nearly the entire space, and no doubt covers many hidden dangers, though we were unable to find any in the short time devoted to that purpose.