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COMMENT

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Our 2016 article, “The Nicoleños in Los Angeles: Documenting the Fate of the Lone Woman’s Community” (Morris et al. 2016), discussed the status of the native people removed from California’s San Nicolas Island and taken to live in Los Angeles in 1835, and it contextualized that removal by discussing native communities in Los Angeles and identifying such specific village localities as the *Ranchería de los Pipimares* (Village of the Island Indians). We recently became aware of a *Los Angeles Herald* article from 1894 that corroborates some of our findings and may call others into question (Warner 1894).

Jonathan Trumbull Warner, author of “Catalina Island’s Lost Tribe: Strange People Who Lived by Themselves,” was an American who first arrived in Los Angeles in 1831 and lived in the city from 1834 to 1840 (Barrows 1895:23; Layne 1936:89). He became a Mexican citizen and went by the name of Juan José Warner while in California. Warner visited the East Coast in 1840–1841, then returned to California and resided in San Diego from

1843–1857. He was granted land that became known as Warner’s Ranch, an important trading post for travelers. Warner went on to help secure California statehood, representing Los Angeles in the California Assembly. He moved back to Los Angeles in 1857 and remained in the city until his death in 1895. Warner wrote about Los Angeles history in an 1876 centennial publication and penned his first article about the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island in the *Los Angeles Star* in 1856. Warner added new details about the Lone Woman’s people, the Nicoleños, who were taken to live in Los Angeles, in a subsequent article published in the *Los Angeles Herald* nearly 40 years later. A section of relevant text from Warner’s 1894 article is transcribed below.

In 1832 there were, and had been for many years, two Indian villages in the town of Los Angeles; one was near the intersection of Aliso and Alameda streets, the people of which were of and they spoke the same dialect as the San Gabriel Indians. The other village was near where the crossing of Eighth and San Pedro streets now is. These people, or their ancestors, had come from Santa Catalina, and their dialect differed slightly from that of the other village.

There were in this latter village some elderly men who were stonecutters. These men occasionally visited their “fatherland,” and occupied themselves with making pots and other cooking utensils from soapstone found on the island. The utensils they disposed of at the mission and to the inhabitants of the town. It was known to the people of California that in 1818, or about that time, a vessel belonging to the Russian-American Fur company engaged in hunting sea fur-bearing animals, with a crew of Kodiak Indian hunters, visited the island of St. Nicholas, and while there a dispute arose between the other hunters and the natives. During a battle that followed nearly all the natives were killed. It was known in the early part of the fourth decade of this century to a few men who were engaged in hunting sea otter around the islands off this coast that there were native inhabitants living on the island of St. Nicholas.

In 1835 Captain James Johnson and Isaac Williams, both residents of Los Angeles, sent a boat to that island to bring the Indians to Los Angeles. Only seven people were found, and comprised an elderly man and woman, a man and woman about 40 years of age respectively, one girl of about 18 years and two boys of about 14 and 15 years each. While the boat’s crew were busy with other matters the old

woman escaped. The remaining six were taken to Los Angeles and taken into the families of Captain Johnson and Mr. Williams as servants, and were treated in the same manner as other Indian servants. They did not speak the dialect of any of the Indians of the mainland with the exception of the girl, who was a halfbreed; the others were all Indians and not distinguishable from the native Indian of California.

Whether from a radical change in diet or some other cause, the islanders that were brought to Los Angeles soon fell sick and it was not long before all of them were dead, except the old man, who recovered with the loss of his sight. He found his way to San Pedro, where he lived a number of years, spending most of his time along the beach gathering such shellfish for food as he could find on the rocks at low tide [Warner 1894].

In both newspaper articles, Warner used primary and secondary information to describe three events in the life of the Lone Woman: the 1814 massacre of the Nicoleños by the Alaska native otter hunters, the 1835 removal of the Nicoleños to Los Angeles, and the 1853 relocation of the Lone Woman to Santa Barbara. Warner's inclusion of "factual" information was not consistent across the two articles, which also contain information that can now be confirmed as erroneous (Morris et al. 2014). Some information in Warner's 1894 article, however, agrees with information present in original documents. James Johnson and Isaac Williams were involved in the lives of the Nicoleños in Los Angeles, and the location of the Village of Island Indians (*Ranchería de los Pipimares*) in Los Angeles was on San Pedro Street between Seventh and Eighth Streets (Morris et al. 2016).

Warner contradicted himself when he made statements about who sailed to San Nicolas Island and returned with the Nicoleños in 1835, and how many Nicoleños died soon after their journey to the mainland. In his 1856 article, Warner claimed that an American and an Englishman went to San Nicolas Island in 1836 and brought the Nicoleños, except for one woman, back to Los Angeles. In 1894, Warner claimed that Los Angeles residents James Johnson (an Englishman) and Isaac Williams (an American) sent a boat to San Nicolas Island to bring back the Nicoleños. This discrepancy could have been a typographical error since went and sent are similar.

Warner was correct about the involvement of both Johnson and Williams in the lives of the Nicoleños who were brought to Los Angeles, which we documented with details from sacramental registers and other original

sources (Morris et al. 2016). Warner was also correct when he added new details in 1894, stating that the Nicoleños removed from the island and taken to Los Angeles worked as servants in the Johnson and related family households. Mexican census records for Los Angeles show that the "Island Indians" Tomás and Juana were listed as servants in 1844, and Juana was noted as a servant in the 1836 census (Morris et al. 2016:103–107; Warner 1894). A Nicoleña baptized in April 1836 as Maria Magdalena was found to have lived in Isaac Williams' home, but we do not know if she acted as a servant in his household (Morris et al. 2016:108–109).

Warner altered his story between his 1856 rendition and the 1894 version in another, more significant, way. In 1856 he claimed that all the Nicoleños who were brought to Los Angeles sickened and died except an old man and a middle-aged woman. Warner wrote that the old man recovered from an illness and lived for years in San Pedro, while the middle-aged woman from San Nicolas Island "lived for years in the home of one of the most respectable citizens" (Warner 1856). By 1894, Warner appears to have forgotten entirely about the middle-aged Nicoleña living for years with a well-regarded family, stating that all the Nicoleños had died soon after arriving in Los Angeles except for the old man. In reality, neither Warner's 1856 nor 1894 version is correct, according to documented evidence. One Nicoleño, a boy baptized as Tomás Guadalupe in December 1835, lived until at least 1860, while several other probable or possible Nicoleñas, Juana, María Luciana, and María Aleja, lived until at least 1850 (Morris et al. 2016:100).

Warner did mention a middle-aged woman about 40 years old in the 1894 article, along with six other companions from San Nicolas Island: "Only seven people were found, an elderly man and woman, a man and woman about 40 years of age respectively, one girl of about 18 years and two boys of 14 or 15 years each" (Warner 1894). According to Warner, the elderly woman escaped and remained on San Nicolas Island, while the other six sailed from the island on the boat that Johnson and Williams sent, and were taken to Los Angeles.

Our research indicates that Warner erred in his 1894 article with regard to the gender and age of the individuals from San Nicolas Island. A boy who was about 5 years old when he was baptized as Tomás Guadalupe at the Los Angeles Plaza Church in December

1835 was clearly identified as having come from San Nicolas Island (Morris et al. 2016:103–107). Our research also led us to discover documentary evidence of two young women who were either confirmed as being from San Nicolas Island, or were highly likely to have been from that island: María Magdalena and Juana (Morris et al. 2016:107–109). Warner noted one young woman from San Nicolas Island, and may have missed seeing Juana, a second Island Indian woman who was baptized in 1836. Juana lived in the extended Johnson family household which included Johnson's Guirado relatives until at least 1844, when she appears next to Tomás in the Mexican census of Los Angeles (Morris et al. 2016:100).

Where Warner provides unique and valuable information in his 1894 article is in his discussion of the location of the Island Indian Village at San Pedro Street near Eighth Street, and the presence of the Indian village near Alameda and Aliso streets. As a long-time resident of Los Angeles, Warner would have personally observed these village localities on a regular basis—the Island Indian village was on the main road from Los Angeles to the harbor at San Pedro, and the other Indian village (or *ranchería*) was on the road (Aliso Street) from Los Angeles to Mission San Gabriel. Warner maintains that both villages were in place by at least 1832, which corroborates such primary source evidence as María Cesaria Valenzuela de Lorenzana's recollections of the *Ranchería de los Pipimares*, or Village of Island Indians, that we presented previously (Morris et al. 2016:97–98, 113 nt.7).

According to Warner in 1894, this was the location of a village established by people who originally came from Catalina Island. He described several older men in this village who worked as 'stonecutters' creating items from soapstone. While the *Ranchería de los Pipimares* was likely inhabited by individuals from Catalina Island, it was just as likely to have been the home of former residents of San Clemente and San Nicolas islands. In Table 1 of our article we showed that of the 44 Island Gabrielino baptized at the Los Angeles Plaza Church from 1826–1836, 26 were from San Clemente Island, 10 were from Santa Catalina Island, two were from San Nicolas Island, and six were noted simply as *Isleños* (Morris et al. 2016:95). Los Angeles resident José Jacinto Reyes, who was godfather to more island Indians than anyone else in the city, owned the agricultural lot directly across San Pedro Street from

the *Ranchería de los Pipimares* (Morris et al. 2016:98). Four of the six island Indians who were his godchildren were from San Clemente Island, while only two were from Catalina Island (The Huntington Library, Early California Population Project Database, 2006). Reyes' daughter, Encarnación, was godmother to María Luciana, whose island Indian parents were noted on her 1836 Los Angeles Plaza Church baptismal record and could have come from San Nicolas Island in 1835 (Morris et al. 2016:100). Therefore, it is highly likely that individuals from all three of the southern Channel Islands lived at the *Ranchería de los Pipimares*, not just people from Catalina Island, as suggested by Warner.

Warner was likely correct with regard to his statement that an Indian village had been in place since at least 1832 near the intersection of Alameda and Aliso streets in Los Angeles. The earliest original document discovered to date about an Indian village near this location is dated Jan. 21, 1836. That document was a petition by Juan Domingo [John Groningen] for land in front of his property on Aliso Street (Domingo 1836). The timing of his petition in January 1836 is evidence that the Indian village north of Aliso Street was in place at least as early as 1836, and probably earlier, as Warner mentioned.

Later in 1836, land was given to the Indians who had been displaced from the *Ranchería de los Poblanos* at Los Angeles and First streets (Morris et al. 2016:94, 97, 112 nt.2). The new land occupied by the former *Ranchería de los Poblanos* residents was south of the agricultural lot of Juan Domingo, between his lot and that of Vicente Sanchez (Lugo 1842). Therefore, there were two localities inhabited by Indians in Los Angeles, north and south of Domingo's lot on Aliso Street, as noted in original records from at least 1836.

Warner's two newspaper articles on the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island and the Nicoleños make it clear that he used both primary information (based on his experience) and unattributed secondary information, or hearsay. As one of a small group of English-speaking residents living in Los Angeles in the 1830s, Warner would have known James (Santiago) Johnson and Isaac Williams. He may have observed some of the Nicoleños who were brought to the city to live in the Johnson and Williams' homes. But he was likely unaware of all of the Nicoleños brought from the island in 1835, nor did he track how long they lived.

From the time that they arrived in Los Angeles, the Nicoleños were scattered among various households in the city. That may be why Warner accurately remembered the older Nicoleño who lived at San Pedro who came to be called Black Hawk. Warner would have encountered him at the harbor on numerous occasions. Warner may have also heard of María Magdalena's death in April 1836, and presumed, since he didn't see the other Nicoleños, that they had all died as well (Morris et al. 2016:100).

Warner's statement that six Nicoleños were removed from the island in 1835 corresponds closely with the number (seven) of individuals we identified in original records who were confirmed as Nicoleño, or who had possible connections to the 1835 group removed from San Nicolas Island (Morris et al. 2016:100). Warner may have learned about the Nicoleños from Johnson and/or Williams, but may not have seen all of the Nicoleños himself. Warner's claim that there were two 14 or 15-year-old Nicoleños was investigated, and no teenage Indian boys were baptized at either the Los Angeles Plaza Church or Mission San Gabriel in 1835 or 1836. There is a slight possibility that the two teenage boys mentioned by Warner were Nicoleños who lived in Los Angeles but did not undergo baptism. In summary, it is likely that over the course of nearly 60 years from the time of the 1835 removal (an event in which Warner did not participate) and the publication of his 1894 article, Warner incorrectly recalled who he observed or what he was told by James Johnson or Isaac Williams about the number, gender, ages, and life span of the Nicoleños who were brought to live in Los Angeles.

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