Finding Aid to George Nidever’s Remembrance of the Lone Indian Woman of San Nicolas Island MS.764

Finding aid prepared by Holly Rose Larson
Autry National Center, Braun Research Library
234 Museum Drive
Los Angeles, CA, 90065-5030
323-221-2164
room@theautry.org
2012 December 5
Title: George Nidever's Remembrance of the Lone Indian Woman of San Nicolas Island

Identifier/Call Number: MS.764

Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Braun Research Library

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 0.1 linear feet (1 folder)

Date (inclusive): 1878-1915, undated

Abstract: A hand-written manuscript entitled "The Indian Woman of San Nicolas," which records the remembrances of George Nidever, as recorded by E. F. Murray in Santa Barbara, California, November 4, 1878, and a hand-written note of biographical information on Nidever.

creator: Murray, E. F.

creator: Nidever, George, 1802-1883

Scope and Contents
A hand-written manuscript entitled "The Indian Woman of San Nicolas," which records the remembrances of George Nidever, as recorded by E. F. Murray in Santa Barbara, California, November 4, 1878. The file also contains a hand-written note signed "Bowers" that states that Nidever was about 70 years old in 1915 and said that his father, Captain George Nidever, brought the lone Indian woman from San Nicolas Island to Santa Barbara in 1854. A typed copy of Murray's manuscript is included.

Preferred citation
George Nidever's Remembrance of the Lone Indian Woman of San Nicolas Island, 1878-1915, Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.764.

Processing history
Processed by Library staff before 1981. Finding aid completed by Holly Rose Larson, NHPRC Processing Archivist, 2012 December 5, made possible through grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commissions (NHPRC).

Acquisition
Accessioned into the Library in 1933. Source and date of gift unknown.

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Access
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Biographical note
Juana Maria (died October 18, 1853), better known to history as the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island (her Indian name is unknown), was a Native American woman who was the last surviving member of her tribe, the Nicoleño. She lived alone on San Nicolas Island from 1835 until her discovery in 1853.

In the fall of 1853, Carl Dittman discovered human footprints on the beach and pieces of seal blubber which had been left out to dry. Further investigation led to the discovery of Juana Maria, who was living on the island in a crude hut partially constructed of whale bones. Juana Maria was taken to the Santa Barbara Mission, but was unable to communicate with anyone. The local Chumash Indians could not understand her, so the mission sent for a group of Tongva or Gabrielseño who had formerly lived on Santa Catalina Island, but they were unsuccessful as well. Four words and two songs recorded from Juana Maria suggest she spoke one of the Uto-Aztecan languages native to Southern California, but it is not clear to which branch it is related.

Juana Maria was reportedly fascinated and ecstatic upon arrival, marveling at the sight of horses, along with European clothing and food. Just seven weeks after arriving on the mainland, Juana Maria died. Modern analysis suggests she contracted dysentery.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juana_Maria

Biographical note
George Nidever (also spelled Nidiver) (1802, December 20 – 1883, March 24) was an American mountain man, explorer, fur trapper, memoirist and sailor. In the 1830s he became one of the first wave of American settlers to move to Mexican California, where he made his living in fur trapping. In 1853 he led the expedition that rescued Juana Maria, the last member of the Nicoleño people, from San Nicolas Island where she had been living alone for eighteen years. Toward the end of his life Nidever wrote a memoir, "Life and Adventures of George Nidever."

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
- Juana Marie, d. 1853
- Indian women -- California
- Indians of North America -- California
- Indians of North America -- California -- Antiquities
- Manuscripts
- Nicoleño Indians
- San Nicolas Island (Calif.) -- History
- Typescripts