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Errors and omissions:

Reference:

For a geological note (no, it was not carved by the wind and the waves) see:

<http://www.nickdoe.ca/pdfs/Webp27c.pdf>

There are more notes of salt weathering of sandstone at:

<http://www.nickdoe.ca/pdfs/Webp26c.pdf>

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Malaspina's lost gallery

by Barrie Humphrey

Sometime in 1902, George Davidson,¹ a professor of geography at the University of California, decided to solve a puzzle that had been bothering him for some time. The puzzle concerned one of the illustrations from his copy of the book, *Voyage around the world...*² by Alejandro Malaspina,³ which he had acquired two years earlier from a retired Spanish naval officer. The illustration was of a rock formation shaped like a breaking wave, beneath which a group of Spanish sailors met with local inhabitants, one of whom was wearing a conical hat.

The accompanying text, translated, read: "View of a natural gallery, one hundred *pies* [feet] long and ten wide,⁴ in the neighbourhood of the Port of Descanso in the Strait of Juan de Fuca".

It bothered Professor Davidson that he could not locate this striking formation anywhere on the northwest coast, despite his familiarity with the area. In the hope of enlisting Canadian help, he sent a description of the illustration to Captain

John Devereux,⁵ dock master at Esquimalt, requesting that Devereux bring his 27 years of experience sailing the coast, and his contacts with "the lighthouse people, the telegraph people, and the Catholic missionaries" to bear on the question of where the curious rock formation illustrated in the *Voyage around the world...* might be found. Perhaps, Davidson suggested, it is located in some obscure opening like that of Nitinat.⁶

Captain Devereux replied on August 23, 1902, indicating that he would make enquiries about "the Basaltic formations you mention" "...at Nitinat Lake", but remarked that he had "never heard the Spanish word 'descánso' [rest or relaxation] applied to any place there", and was doubtful that the feature described by Davidson would be found in Nitinat.

Devereux sent a copy of the description to W. P. Daykin, lighthouse-keeper at Carmanah Point, who replied on October 4 that Nitinat seemed an unlikely candidate for Port Descanso, "as a vessel of any size could not get in", and "...there is no such ledge of rock as you mention in the whole lake". In his reply to Devereux, Daykin suggested that the most likely place was "Tchuquanah [Tsuquanah Point] (7 miles W)—where the caves are", "...there are some old ships'

¹ See Biographical Endnote 1.

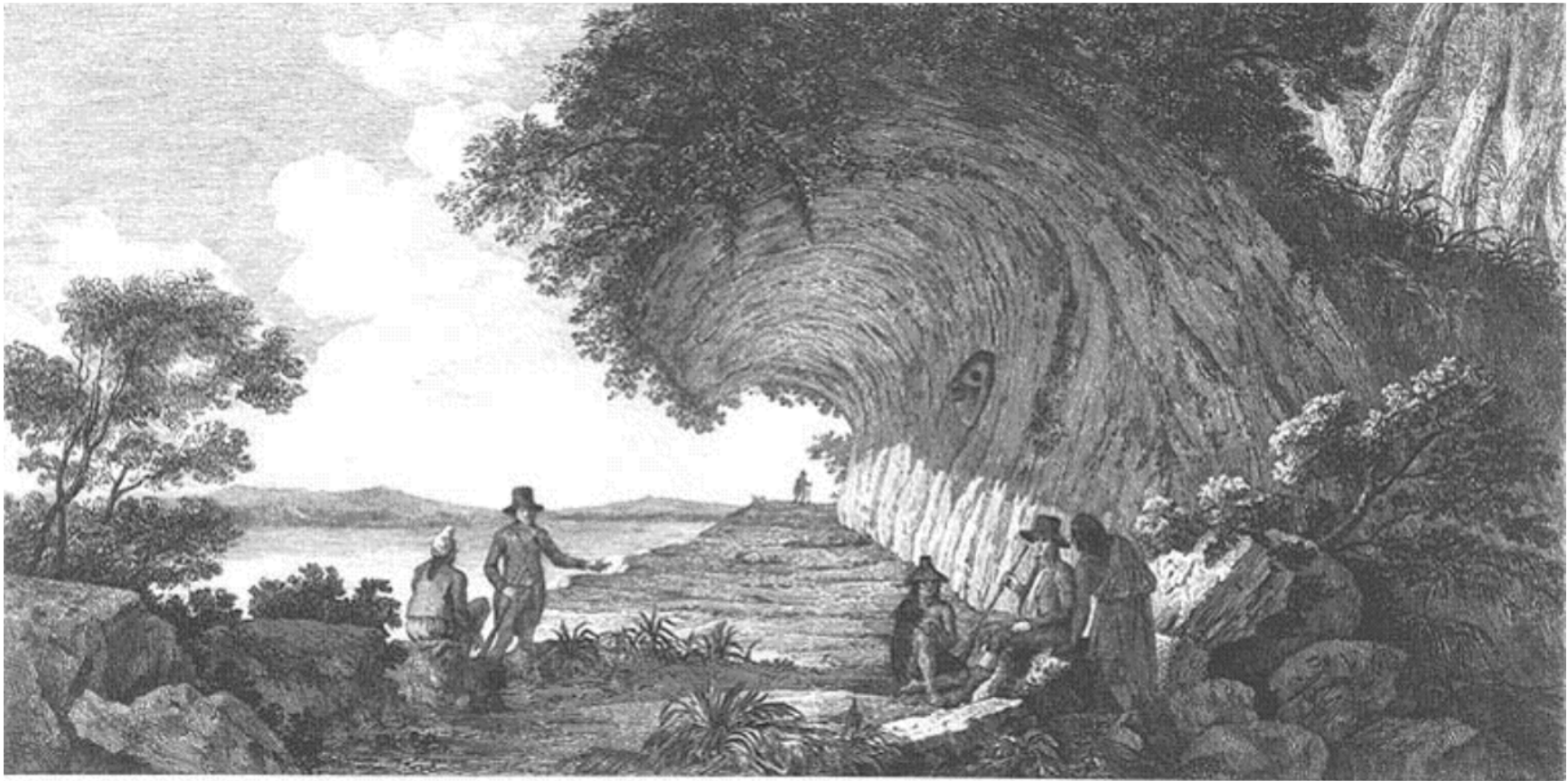
² Pedro Novo y Colson, ed., *Viaje político-científico alrededor del mundo por las corbetas Descubierta y Atrevida...desde 1789 a 1794*, Madrid, 1884 (2nd edition 1885). The Hakluyt Society of London is currently publishing a three-volume English-language account of the voyage—*The Malaspina Expedition 1789–1794*. The expedition arrived at Nootka Sound on August 13, 1791, and left on August 28.

³ See *Malaspina galleries—what's in a name?* *SHALE* 8, pp.12–15, June 2004.

⁴ A Spanish *pie* was 0.278 m, the dimensions are thus 27.8 × 2.8 m (91 × 9 ft.), a gross underestimate.

⁵ See Biographical Endnote 2.

⁶ Nitinat Lake is on the west coast of Vancouver Island, near the entrance of the Juan de Fuca Strait. It has been used as a refuge by fishing vessels and tugs of moderate draught, but the entrance is only about 42 metres (140 ft.) wide, and at times, conditions at the bar make it far too dangerous to cross.



VISTA DE UNA GALERIA NATURAL DE CIEN PIES DE LARGO Y DIEZ DE ANCHO EN LA INMEDIACION DEL PUERTO DEL DESCANSO EN EL ESTRECHO DE JUAN DE FUCA



Photograph by Jackie Watkins

Malaspina's gallery on Gabriola, first drawn in 1792, as it appeared 200 years later.

The engraving at the top is from page 200 of the book *Viaje político-científico alrededor del mundo...* published in 1884 in Madrid. It is the illustration that Professor Davidson used in his enquiries. The engraving is a copy of a painting, which in turn is a copy of a sketch made in 1792 when the Galiano-Valdés expedition visited Gabriola. The original sketch has been lost, but it almost certainly did not include the vegetation in the lefthand bottom corner, the "potted plants" in the centre at the bottom, or the trees in the top righthand corner. The tree just above and to the right of the distant figure at the end of the gallery is an addition to the painting made by the engraver.

The gallery today is 93 m long (305 ft.); and the depth varies between about 3.2 m (10 ft.) at the floor, and 5.2 m (17 ft.) at the deepest part. It is about 5 m high (16 ft.). The grain-by-grain erosion of the backwall proceeds at nearly 2 mm per year, so the gallery today must be about a foot deeper than it was then.

anchors and chains there". Daykin included photographs of the caves in his reply.

Devereux, who suffered badly from rheumatism, did not get around to forwarding Daykin's letter to Davidson until June 20 of the following year.

In July 1903, Professor Davidson made six photographic copies of the illustration in Malaspina's book. He sent three to Devereux, and two to E. O. S. Scholefield, BC's Provincial Librarian,⁷ asking for his help in locating the rock formation. Scholefield, despite a long-standing interest in the history of the northwest coast and a growing collection of books on the topic, was unable to provide an answer.

A GEOGRAPHICAL PUZZLE PICTURE —*Colonist headline (9.8.03)*

Scholefield recognized that an appeal for help was required, and so on August 9, 1903, the illustration, accompanied by a request for its identification, appeared in the *Sunday Victoria Daily Colonist* under the above headline.

THAT MYSTERIOUS GROTTOR OR GALLERY—*Colonist headline (12.8.03)*

Within days, W. E. Losee, a self-described engineer and entrepreneur,⁸ replied to Scholefield with a description of "a grotto on Vaseaux Lake"⁹ (*sic*) that exactly resembles the engraving".

He believed that the vegetation in the Malaspina plate—"a sort of cacti" and "stunted and crooked" trees—was much more typical of the dry interior than of the coast, and presumed that "the engraving was

⁷ See Biographical Endnote 3.

⁸ See Biographical Endnote 4.

⁹ Vaseux [Fr. muddy or slimy] Lake, 24 km south of Penticton.

made by some member of the H. B. Co. [Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)] while on a trading expedition from Fort Hope".

Although not known at the time, Losee's remarks about the vegetation were particularly astute. The book illustration that Professor Davidson was working from was an engraving by Bartolomé Maura made in the 1880s. Maura worked from a much earlier painting found among the Malaspina papers in the Madrid Archives. This was by the Italian painter, Fernando Brambila (1763–1834).¹⁰ Brambila was an official artist of the Malaspina expedition, and he visited Mexico, but he did not visit the northwest coast.¹¹ The basis of Brambila's painting was a sketch by José Cardero (1776–?),¹² who unlike Brambila, was not a trained artist. This sketch, along with any copies that have ever been made, has now been lost; however, it is a fair bet that Cardero's original did not include the vegetation, and that this was added later by Bambila in Madrid, perhaps influenced by his Mexican experience.

VASSEAUX (*sic*) LAKE GROTTOR—*Colonist headline (13.8.03)*

The following day, August 13, 1903, the *Colonist* printed a short letter to the editor from Losee in which he explained that he was not suggesting that Malaspino[a] had visited the interior, but was instead proposing that Galiano or Valdés had secured the sketch from fur-traders in 1792

¹⁰ See Biographical Endnote 5.

¹¹ Carmen Sotos Serrano, *Los Pintores de la Expedición de Alejandro Malaspina*, pp.99–121, Madrid, 1992. The title to Brambila's painting does not include dimensions, and it is not known where the (incorrect) dimensions came from, for, contrary to often-repeated assertions, no Spanish description of the gallery has ever been found.

¹² See Biographical Endnote 6.

and had subsequently included it in Malapina's papers on their return to Madrid.¹³ It may have sounded plausible; however, one of the several flaws in this theory was that the HBC had no presence on the coast before 1821, and the first fur-trader to visit Lake Vaseux was probably John Stuart of the Pacific Fur Company (the Astorians)¹⁴ sixteen years after the Spanish had finally left the coast. As for Fort Hope, it wasn't built until 1849.

SCENIC FREAK FOUND AT LAST—
Colonist headline (16.8.03)

Losee's letter was followed on August 16 by another, from W. J. Sutton.¹⁵ It included a photograph of the Vasseur Lake (*sic*) grotto (*above right*).

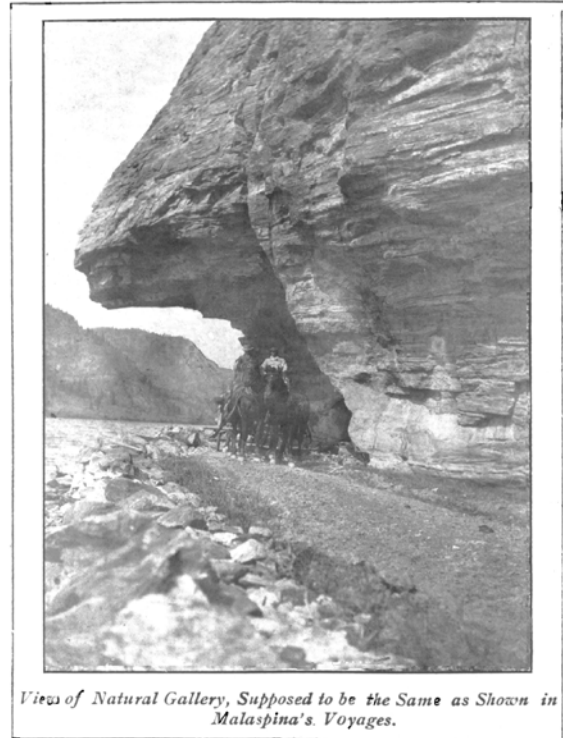
Sutton had no doubt of this grotto being the same as Malaspina's: "That it is the identical place referred to is most conclusively proved by the crude carving of an image in the rock shown in both pictures in the same place."¹⁶ The *Colonist*, judging by its headline, also seemed to have no doubts. "A portion of the overhanging rock," Sutton went on to say, "has been blasted away for the road, and the slight differences in the pictures may be due to the embellishments of the artist".

¹³ Galiano and Valdés, along with junior officers Vernacci and Salamanca, were members of the main body of the expedition until it reached Acapulco, Mexico, in late 1791. There, they were ordered by Malaspina to return to Nootka in the schooners *Sutil* and *Mexicana* and explore the Juan de Fuca Strait the following summer. The young artist Cardero went with them.

¹⁴ In 1812. G.P.V. Akrigg and Helen B. Akrigg, *British Columbia Chronicle, 1778–1846*, pp.150–156, Discovery Press, 1975.

¹⁵ See Biographical Endnote 7.

¹⁶ Lynda Poulton and I spent over an hour looking for this "conclusive proof" in an enlarged copy of the photograph. We couldn't see it.



View of Natural Gallery, Supposed to be the Same as Shown in Malaspina's Voyages.

Victoria Times-Colonist (also BCARS I-67694)

Nothing further appeared in the *Colonist* for several weeks.

It might have been thought that Professor Davidson's question had been answered, and that the "scenic freak" had indeed been "found at last", but a few readers of the paper were far from satisfied. One was a veteran of the Crimean War who had come to BC in 1862 looking for gold, and ended up working in Nanaimo as a miner for three years before returning to the interior to make his fortune mining coal. Peter Creeke Fernie,¹⁷ now comfortably retired to Victoria, was trying to remember where he had seen that "grotto" before.

Another resident of Victoria, Justice Archer Martin of the BC Supreme Court,¹⁸ was sufficiently interested in the question that he had clipped the *Colonist* articles on the

¹⁷ See Biographical Endnote 8.

¹⁸ See Biographical Endnote 9.

subject as they appeared, and pasted them into a journal (now in the BC Archives). On August 18, two days after the publication of the Lake Vaseux photograph, he began a correspondence with Professor Davidson, sending him copies of the *Colonist* articles, requesting a copy of the Malaspina illustration, and expressing some doubt about "the Vasseaux-Lake solution".

Davidson replied to Judge Martin on the 21st, enclosing his last copy of the illustration, and agreeing that the Losee/Sutton material "does not cover the case", especially as the explorers of the coast never had contact with the interior. He drew attention to the location of the gallery in the *Estrecho de Juan de Fuca* [Juan de Fuca Strait] and the *Puerto del Descanso* [Port of Descanso], and was quite sure that it was not on the American side, as he had himself been responsible for most of the surveys of that region between 1852 and 1857.

Davidson also mentioned "the hat of the Indian!", apparently in reference to some part of Martin's letter to him. I assume this is a reference to the conical hat worn by the seated man in the Malaspina illustration. Because Martin was on circuit, Davidson's letter did not reach him until he was in Cowichan on the 31st, and Martin did not reply until September 10.

In the meantime, Peter Fernie had retrieved his gallery memory, and wrote Scholefield at the end of August:

"Sir: With reference to the picture in the *Colonist* of 9th inst., I think the place is to be found on the north end of Gabriola Island...[where] a grotto or gallery similar to the drawing existed in '62. ...The end of the gallery where the three men are, and the trees at the back (stunted Douglas pine) correspond exactly with what I remember...."

His letter was published in the *Colonist* of September 3, 1903, under the headline:

MALASPINA'S GALLERY. STILL ANOTHER ECHO FROM ONE WHO FANCIES HE KNOWS THE SPOT—
Colonist headline (3.9.03)

This appears to be the first use of the term "Malaspina's Gallery", a name it retains today, though not on any official map or chart.

The next day, September 4, the *Nanaimo Free Press* joined the discussion by printing Fernie's letter, under the same headline.

A week later, on Thursday, September 10, Judge Martin finally replied to Professor Davidson's letter of August 21, thanking him for sending the copy of the illustration from the *Voyage around the world...* He referred to Fernie's letter and commented, "I should not be at all surprised to find that Mr. Fernie is correct". He did not mention *Puerto del Descanso* or the "Indian hat", which suggests that he may not have recognized their significance until a day or two later.

MALASPINA'S GALLERY—*Colonist headline (12.9.03)*

On Saturday, September 12, Martin wrote to the *Colonist*, which published his letter, without comment, in its Sunday edition. In this letter, he remarked that "a careful comparison of the pictures...is sufficient to show that they are not the same". There must be, he asserted, two galleries, one at Vaseux Lake, quite distinct from the other pictured by Malaspina, for one of the most distinctive features of the latter is the hat of the Indian, which is of a shape unknown in the interior (presumably Davidson's point).

Martin went on to reject the idea that the Spaniards could have had communication

with the interior, on grounds of lack of evidence, and felt that the most significant point was the statement accompanying the picture from the *Voyage around the world...* that the gallery is in the neighbourhood of *Puerto del Descanso* in the Juan de Fuca Strait (again as Davidson had stressed to him in his letter of August 21).

Martin recalled (correctly) that in the documents of the 1792 Galiano-Valdés expedition, the phrase “...*en el Estrecho de Juan de Fuca*” was routinely applied to all locations between the mainland and Vancouver Island, not just those in the Juan de Fuca Strait. He went on to refer to a map accompanying his copy of the *Voyage of the Sutil and Mexicana*,¹⁹ where he had found the name *Cala Descanso* given by the Galiano-Valdés expedition of 1792 to some part of Nanaimo harbour.²⁰

Given his focus on the Galiano-Valdés map, it is hard not to conclude that he discovered this between September 10, when he wrote Davidson without mentioning it, and September 12, when he wrote to the *Colonist*.

¹⁹ *Relación del viaje hecho por las goletas Sutil y Mexicana en el año 1792 para reconocer el Estrecho de Juan de Fuca*, Madrid, 1802.

²⁰ Galiano called the expedition's anchorage both *Puerto del Descanso* [port of the rest] and *Cala Descanso* [cove of rest]. The anchorage was not the present-day Descanso Bay, *SHALE* 1, pp.12–21. Four of Gabriola's earliest settlers, including Richard Chapple, *SHALE* 3, pp.18–19, and Thomas Degnen, for whom Degnen Bay is named, registered land on “Cala Descanso Island” or “the island of Cala Descanso” in 1863. The name “Descanso Island” also appears on HBC charts in the 1850s, *SHALE* 3, p.16. See Biographical Endnote 10 for Valdés.

THE SITE OF MALASPINA'S GREAT GALLERY—*Free Press* headline (15.9.03)

Two days later, on September 15, the *Nanaimo Free Press* published a large article on the gallery, reprinting Martin's letter and a short letter from Mark Bate, Nanaimo's ex-mayor and amateur historian, who wrote that “...previous to...1857...the island now known as Gabriola, was called ‘Cala Descanso’ and is so-named on the old maps.”

The article also opined “that such a gallery as described does not now exist on Gabriola Island is tolerably certain”, suggesting that the overhang may have been undermined and fallen, or that “warships fixed their targets to these...cliffs...and their cannonade may have assisted in battering them down”.

The reporter went on to assert with great confidence that “this however is mere speculation. What is certain is that nothing which answers to the description of Malaspina's gallery at present exists on Gabriola Island.”

MALASPINA'S NATURAL GALLERY—SMALL GROTTOES NOW EXIST ON VANCOUVER AND GABRIOLA ISLANDS—ANCIENT MAP SHOWS LATTER ISLAND NAMED CALA DESCANSO—*Colonist* headline (16.9.03)

The next day, Wednesday, September 16, the *Colonist* picked up on the *Nanaimo Free Press* article, (mis)quoting it extensively with regard to the gallery having been destroyed, and further muddying the waters by stating that ex-Mayor Bate “has in his possession an old map in which Gabriola Island is...designated [Cala Descanso]”.²¹

²¹ Martin eventually became aware of this misquotation of Bate's letter to the *Nanaimo Free Press*—his journal contains a handwritten marginal

Martin wrote to Davidson on the 21st: "I think we have settled the question of Malaspina's Gallery, and inclosed [*sic*] I send you a cutting from the *Colonist*, which seems sensible enough. I shall probably be in Nanaimo before long, and when I am there will make some further enquiries myself."

MALASPINA'S GALLERY—*Free Press* headline (25.9.03)

Finally, on Friday, September 25, the *Nanaimo Free Press* published information from someone who lived on Gabriola.

James McLay, JP ²² wrote: "After reading in the *Free Press* an account of the lost Malaspina's natural gallery, I took it to be my duty, with your permission, to give those interested any information I could on this interesting matter. I believe that Malaspina's great gallery is not lost at all, but that perhaps it is as sound today as it was the day he found it over a century ago."

McLay went on to give a clear description of a natural gallery on the north end of Gabriola, differing from the September 15 account in the *Free Press* only in being 250, rather than 100, feet long. He pointed out that the gallery is difficult to see from the water, and is easily passed unnoticed.

Because McLay had not seen the *Colonist* picture from *Voyage around the world...* he assumed that the Martin's "Indian hat" was the boulder on the backwall and so writes:

"...the Indian hat is (I suppose) the distinctive feature. This is composed of a boulder protruding from the back wall and likely somewhat of the shape of the original Indian hat. It has been painted red a long time and parts of the paint with thin shreds of rock attached are peeling off."²³

McLay concludes his letter with this description of the interior of the gallery:

"Now although the gallery without looks plain enough, within it is very beautiful. The floor itself is fretted, honeycombed, twisted, crimped, and curled by traceries of a thousand different patterns, shapes, and forms. The wall and arching ceiling have the same sort of work, but more like pictures frozen on the solid rock, these pictures are relieved by stretches of the purest, cleanest, delicately blushing surface I have ever seen on rock, enough to give one the feeling that even to touch with the finger tip would be sacrilege or that it would leave a stain or blemish."

Archer Martin was later to record in his journal (p.28) that he thought the honeycombing in the gallery "tripe-like".

NATURAL GALLERY ON GABRIOLA ISLAND—OLDEST INHABITANT²⁴ SAYS MALASPINA'S DESCRIPTION IS CORRECT—*Colonist* headline (26.9.03)

Although parts of McLay's letter were picked up by the *Colonist* and published the next day, Saturday the 26th, no one seems to have paid much attention to it. Instead, a group of government employees in

note beside the *Colonist* clipping which refers to Bate's possession of a map: "This is an error. Mr. Bate informed me at Nanaimo that he had no such map". Unfortunately, the note is not dated. The error even misled Gabriola's venerable historian June Lewis-Harrison (*The People of Gabriola...*p.265).

²² See Biographical Endnote 11.

²³ The Snunéymux^w used the galleries as a mortuary, but it is uncertain whether there were traces of Aboriginal artwork on the walls when Europeans arrived. The evidence is conflicting.

²⁴ The *oldest* inhabitant! McLay, who was 66 at the time, did not attain this status until 1916. In 1903, there were six or seven other Gabriolans, including 79-year old Richard Chapple, with better claims to the title.

Nanaimo, while discussing Archer Martin's letter and the probable whereabouts of the gallery, were interrupted by "our janitor, an old-timer" who "described such a one he had often fished from 40 years ago".²⁵

Around the end of September, four of the group, following the janitor's directions, visited the gallery. Henry Good described their visit and how they verified its identity from the descriptions given in the newspapers. They took photographs, which didn't turn out, and told others of their "discovery", after which there was "quite a rush" to see the gallery.²⁶

Among the gallery's next visitors was Harry Rogers, a Nanaimo pharmacist, who travelled over with a number of friends on Thanksgiving Day.²⁷ He turned out to be a better photographer than Henry Good, and the windows of his pharmacy at the corner

²⁵ Although this old-timer deserves a good share of the credit for locating the gallery, his name is nowhere mentioned. The best candidate is Jesse Sage, one of the few surviving immigrants from the first voyage of the *Princess Royal*—the so-called Nanaimo *Mayflower*—who was listed in directories of the time as janitor at the Court House. Sage's son George was married to Mary Ann Stubbings, whose father, Robert, pre-empted land on Gabriola with Robert Gray in 1862, which is about the same time as Jesse (if it was him) was fishing near the gallery.

²⁶ Quotations in this paragraph are from a letter Good wrote to Martin on October 24, 1903.

²⁷ October 15, 1903. The Rogers party is interesting for a variety of reasons. It was composed largely of members of Nanaimo's new middle class, including the vice-president of the Board of Trade, several merchants and clerks, and the owner of Nanaimo's premier bicycle shop (Robert J. Wenborn), whose wife, Agnes (née Shaw), also present, had grown up on Gabriola Island, where her father was one of the island's first professional teachers. The group also contained a number of visitors from other parts of the province, one from Winnipeg, and one from California. They may well have been the first tourists to set foot on Gabriola.

of Bastion and Commercial were soon showing photographs of the gallery and its visitors (see *pages 12 and 13*).²⁸

MALASPINA'S GALLERY. PARTY OF NANAIMO PEOPLE VISIT THIS WONDERFUL SPOT ON GABRIOLA—*Herald* headline (17.10.03)

Both Nanaimo papers published major articles on the "rediscovery" of the gallery on Saturday, October 17, the version in the *Daily Herald* being particularly noteworthy in that in publishing its first report on the topic, it managed to get almost everything wrong, including even the day of the week on its own masthead (Friday, October 17). The article has Dr. Helmcken of Victoria as the instigator of the enquiry; Malaspina drawing the book illustration; Malaspina being one of the crew of Capt. Valdés or Capt. Galiano; Vaseux Lake becoming Tranquille Lake, near Kamloops; and it being impossible to travel in those days in the interior of British Columbia on account of "the impenetrable bush, swarming with hostile savages and wild animals".

The description of the gallery adds that:

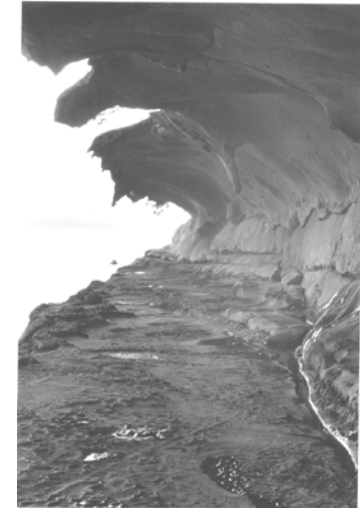
"Along the inner side of the ledge...the action of the water has sculptured out many remarkable figures, among them being the figure of an Indian re-clining against the wall. This figure was so noticeable in the days of Malaspina that it was made one of the details of the drawing and it appears today a proof conclusive that the chamber on Gabriola Island is beyond doubt the gallery of which the old cut was a copy."

²⁸ Copies of two of these were purchased by Good to send to Martin. Others were bought by the Nanaimo Board of Trade to be made into postcards to boost the city. One such postcard is in Martin's journal; the Gabriola Museum Archives have another. It shows a man and a seated woman in the gallery. The man stands facing the back wall. His posture suggests that he may be carving something into it.



Schwarze Photographers, Nanaimo Archives (also BCARS B-03620)

Fashionable tourists from Nanaimo visiting the gallery shortly after its re-discovery in 1903.



The photograph above taken in 2003 shows that remarkably little has changed in the outline of the roof of the gallery in the past 100 years.

The newspaper article in the *Colonist* (October 18) recorded that then, as now, the first 15 yards (14 m) of the gallery was “an open terrace...where the overhanging cliff has broken away”.



Gabriola Museum Archives (also BCARS I-67692)

The Harry Rogers party at the gallery, October 15, 1903. The tide indicates the photograph was taken around three o'clock in the afternoon. These were possibly the first tourists ever to visit Gabriola.

John Foster's old farmhouse is seen at the end of the bay on the right. The bay used to be known as Foster's Bay, although today it has no name. The cliff on this side of the bay, beyond the end of the main gallery, is riddled with more than half a dozen large cavities that are eroding internally in exactly the same way as the main gallery. This series of cavities may one day be connected internally to form a cloister-like structure.

The *Daily Herald* article included the names of the visitors. The number of visitors (23) listed and the presence of two “launches” are more consistent with the photograph (page 13) in the *Colonist* and in Martin’s journal than with the report in the *Nanaimo Free Press* published the same day. So it looks as if the *Herald* got this right, at least.

MALASPINA’S GALLERY FULLY IDENTIFIED AT LAST—*Free Press* headline (17.10.03)

The *Free Press* article added to its account some geological speculation (commendable, but mostly wrong):²⁹

“The floor is a natural causeway of conglomerate from above which a soft strata of sandstone has been washed away by the sea, forming the gallery, which is roofed in by the overhanging cliffs. ...at the back one boulder has been shaped by the waves into a representation of an Indian head. Curious crosses and other marks also abound and at first it is hardly credible that these are other than human work, the coloring caused by iron adding to this impression. A closer examination, however shows that the sea has been the only artist.”

The *Colonist* followed suit on Sunday, and included two of Rogers’ photographs.

IS FOUND AT LAST

—MALASPINA’S FAMOUS GALLERY LOCATED DEFINITELY ON GABRIOLA ISLAND

—COLONIST CORRESPONDENT OBTAINS PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE RARE SCENE

—NO QUESTION WHATSOEVER AS TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE IDENTIFICATION—*Colonist* headline (18.10.03)

The *Colonist* publication of October 18 was the last on the topic, but it was far from the end of Judge Martin’s interest. The next day, he sent a clipping of the *Colonist* article

²⁹ See *SHALE* 9, pp.53–56, for geological notes.

to Professor Davidson at Berkeley, with a perhaps forgivable self-congratulatory letter:

“...we have at last found beyond question the Gallery of Malaspina ... and ... it has turned out to be where I said in my letter of the 12th of September...”

Davidson replied on the 24th, thanking Martin for the clipping, and agreeing that “Mr. Harry Rogers seems to have gotten hold of the ‘Natural Gallery’ of Malaspina’s Narrative. ...The original in Malaspina must have been drawn by the earlier Spanish voyagers who worked about the region of Fuca Strait, Gulf of Georgia &c, because Malaspina’s vessels left the Coast in the latitude of Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound. So if one had the old narratives of Bodega [y Quadra], Eliza, Quimper, Fidalgo and others we could tell the author.”³⁰

A week later, Martin received a letter from Henry Good describing his trip to the gallery and enclosing two of Harry Rogers’ photographs. Martin replied immediately, thanking Good, and proposing that they meet the following week, when Martin would be in Nanaimo for the assizes. He closed with congratulations to Good for his discovery, “which is of no little practical importance to the town from the point of view of a scenic attraction for tourists”.

While no record of their meeting (nor of Martin’s meeting with Mark Bate) could be found, Martin’s journal documents a trip he

³⁰ This letter was found in the Davidson Collection of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

Of the expeditions mentioned, only Eliza’s entered the Strait of Georgia. Although it is possible that the gallery was seen by Eliza expedition members José María Narváez, Juan Carrasco, and José Verdía when they came to Nanaimo Harbour (*Boca de Winthuysen*) in July 1791, there is no extant evidence that they did. (Henry R. Wagner, *Spanish Explorations in the Strait of Juan de Fuca*, AMS Press, 1933).

took that week (on Wednesday, October 28) to see the gallery himself. He gave an extensive and accurate description, including a rough sketch map of its location in Foster's Bay (which is correct despite the text saying the gallery is on the west, not the east, side of the bay), noting the difficulty in seeing the gallery and speculating on the cause of this (the shadow cast by the roof; its natural colouring; and the trees and shrubs growing above).

He ended his note: "Altogether, the place is exceptionally interesting and a great natural curiosity. I regret much to say that already, though it has only been re-discovered a few weeks, owing largely they told me at Nanaimo to my letter [here he is referring to his letter to the *Colonist* published September 13, 1903], yet already the gallery has begun to be defaced by vandals scratching their names, etc. on the walls.

"P.S. It should be added that though so far the gallery is locally called Malaspina's (as the engraving appears in his *Voyage around the world...*); yet, that navigator never was there himself so far as can be ascertained."³¹

He included much of his material from this visit in a three-page letter to Professor Davidson sent three days later. In it, he describes the "Indian head" in some detail, deciding it "is not an aboriginal carving but a projecting fragment of rock [a concretion] which takes somewhat that appearance, but...looks almost like an attempt to carve a sphinx; it is situate[d] further towards the end of the gallery than would appear from the plate". It was, he remarks, "stained

naturally on the brow and face with a red colour".

"About the middle, there is a peculiar hanging piece of the indented roof in the shape of a shield, and hence is locally called 'the shield', which aptly describes it."³²

Over the next two years, the correspondence between Martin and Davidson continued, but without reference to the gallery.

On February 11, 1905, Martin visited the Lands and Works office in Victoria, and looked at two maps. One showed the shore of Gabriola opposite Nanaimo marked *Cala Descanso*.³³ Martin's note in his journal reads, "It looks as though the draughtsman had intended to give that name to the shore of Gabriola to the north, not knowing that *cala* means 'small bay' and that name applies to water and not to land."³⁴

On July 16, Martin's journal notes that, as he came through Active (Plumper's) Pass on the *Princess Victoria*, he noticed, on the shore of Mayne Island, a formation that reminded him of the Malaspina Gallery on a small scale. He commented on it again on his next trip, on the 28th—the last entry in the journal.

Epilogue

In 1906, the main gallery (there are several) was officially named the "Galiano Gallery" by the Geographic Board of Canada.

³¹ This is probably why the proposal to call the nearby point Malaspina Point, made by Commander J.F. Parry of the survey ship *HMS Egeria* in 1904, was declined for 39 years by the Geographic Board of Canada. *SHALE* 8, p.15. Unfortunately, the Board's 1906 meeting minutes cannot be found.

³² This is a fragment of the original outside vertical face of the cliff. The sandstone has been hardened by iron oxides, and so, like the roof, it remains intact. At the time of writing, it is still there.

³³ Nanaimo District Official Map 1859, prepared by the Col. Govt. of V.I. (scale 20 chains to inch).

³⁴ Galiano gave the name to Pilot Bay on Gabriola, but it is impossible to see that on any of the published charts because of their large scale.

Captain John Walbran³⁵ commented on the name change (prematurely) in a letter to the *Nanaimo Free Press* on April 17, managing to mention his upcoming book of coast names in passing.³⁶ He got all the gallery details right, but was the last to do so for some time. (He was a bit premature about his book too, though. It wasn't published until 1909.)

Having Galiano's name on Gabriola has proved too difficult for many writers, even for E.O.S. Scholefield, who you will remember was in at the beginning of the hunt for the gallery. In his book of BC history, published in 1914 and the standard reference for many years after, he included a copy of the plate from Malaspina's *Voyage around the world...* and labelled it: "View of natural gallery on Galiano Island". Others, not surprisingly, followed his lead.

In 1924, the Golden Jubilee edition of the *Nanaimo Free Press* got the location right, but the name wrong. "Malaspino's Cave on Gabriola Island" sounded as if it belonged in *The Tempest*.

On June 7, 1925, the Sunday morning edition of the *Vancouver Sun* featured the "Malaspina Grotto...at the extreme end of Galiano Island..., which overlooks the harbor of Nanaimo". The article described how Malaspina named the gallery for himself "...while he was making a careful examination of the Coast, between Prince of Wales Sound and Fairweather...on August

³⁵ Captain John T. Walbran (1848–1913) published *British Columbia Coast Names* in 1909. A friend of Archer Martin, he used the judge's library extensively in writing the book.

³⁶ Since the board's decision was not made until June 30, it seems likely that it was made on Walbran's advice, it not being widely appreciated in the English-speaking world in 1906 that Malaspina was Galiano's commanding officer and that, as such, had quite a respectable claim to the name.

13, 1791". The article also made note of graffiti on the walls.

In April 1932, the *Daily Colonist* had the Spanish sources saying that the gallery was "in a quiet lake", and four years later, E. J. Hughes painted a mural in Nanaimo's Malaspina Hotel, which showed Malaspina sketching the galleries, although, as Dr. Hughes probably well knew, Malaspina was never there, and there is no evidence that Malaspina possessed any talent as an artist.

As recently as 2001, in the June edition of *Westworld*, Danielle Murphy managed to identify Malaspina in the Spanish drawing, and used a photograph purporting to be of the gallery, but which is of a different rock formation, probably on De Courcy Island, thus proving that the gallery has not lost its ability to cloud minds.

BIOGRAPHICAL ENDNOTES

For **Alejandro Malaspina** (1754–1810) and **Alcalá Galiano** (1760–1805), see *SHALE* 8, pp.12–15.

[1]. **George Davidson** (1825–1911), a British-born American geographer and astronomer, was on the staff of the US Coast and Geodetic Survey from 1845 to 1895, and the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley from 1850 to 1911. He measured the base lines known as the Davidson quadrilaterals, the basis for the primary triangulation of the Pacific coast states. In 1879, he built the first observatory on the Pacific coast, at San Francisco, and headed US expeditions to observe total solar eclipses and the transits of Venus and Mercury. Among his nearly 250 publications are, *The Tracks and Landfalls of Bering and Chirikof* (1901), *The Discovery of San Francisco Bay* (1907), and *Francis Drake on the Northwest Coast* (1908). He was awarded the Charles P.

Daly Gold Medal by the American Geographical Society in 1908. Despite progressive blindness, he continued an active correspondence with geographers and historians until his death in 1911.

[2]. **John Devereux** (1827–1906) was born at Milford Haven, Pembroke, Wales, and went to sea at age 16. He rose rapidly in the East Indian and Australian trade (he was put in command of a ship, the *Bengal*, at age 23), and then as chief officer on mail ships to and from India, from which he retired, comfortably wealthy, in 1863, at age 36. He moved with his family to Victoria in 1864, where bad investments forced him to return to sea as captain of the government steamer *Sir James Douglas*, until 1887, when he was made superintendent of the Esquimalt graving dock, a position he held until his accidental death by drowning in Esquimalt harbour on May 25, 1906.

[3]. **Ethelbert Olaf Stuart Scholefield** (1875–1919), born on the Isle of Wight, came to Canada when his father was appointed rector of Esquimalt in 1887. He became assistant to the first Provincial Librarian, R. E. Gosnell, at age 19, and four years later succeeded to the position of librarian and was also appointed Provincial Archivist. Over the next fourteen years, he added over forty thousand books to the Provincial Library, paying particular attention to the history of the Pacific coast. It is not surprising that Professor Davidson should have sent the gallery question to him. By 1903, Scholefield was corresponding widely with scholars and researchers, and the Provincial Library had become known outside of BC. He helped to organize the Victoria Public Library, and invented “books by mail” to bring books to remote areas of the province. He also wrote, with F. W. Howay, a four-volume history of British

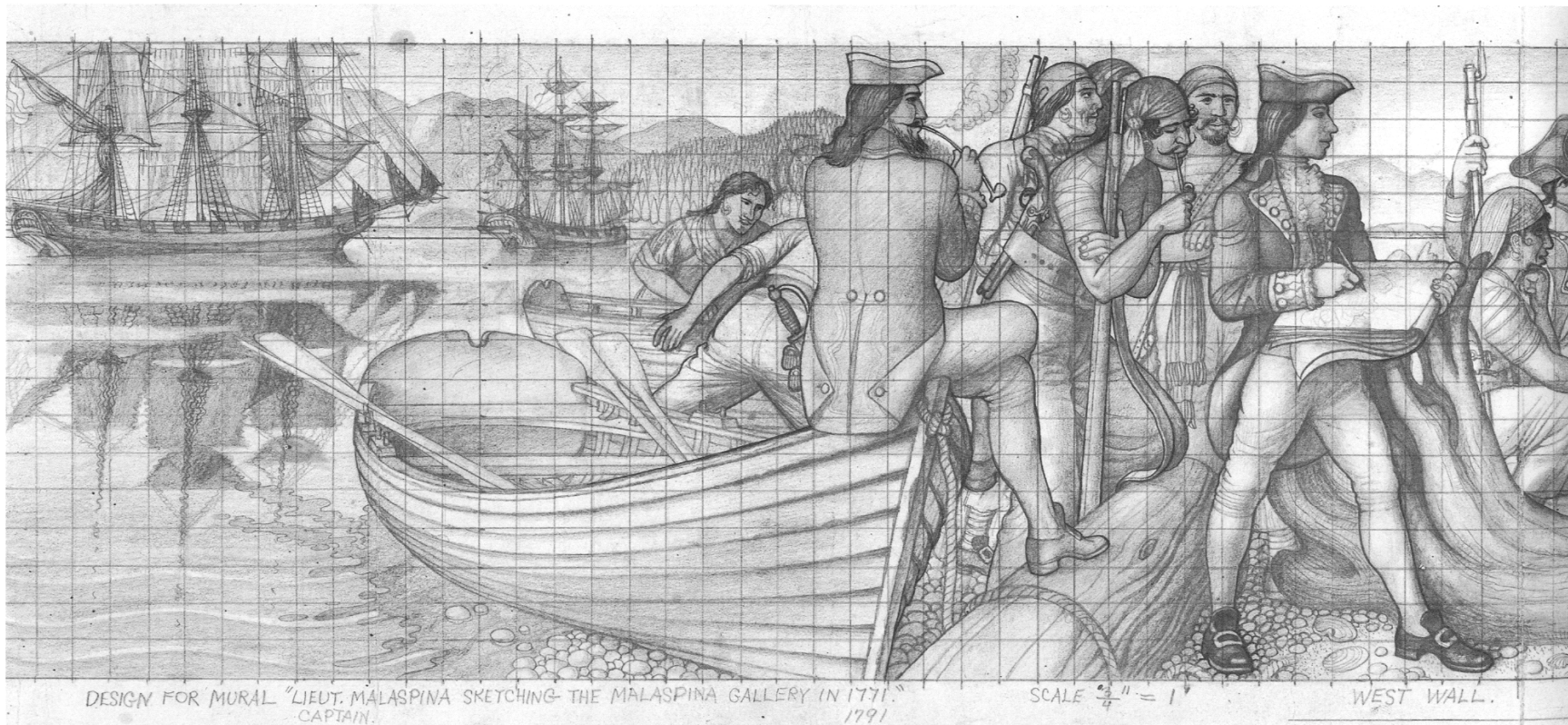
Columbia that was a standard reference for more than 30 years.

[4]. **William Ernest Losee** (c1860–1944), born in Ontario, arrived in Victoria in 1885, fresh from work on the Southern Pacific Railway in California, and persuaded Robert Dunsmuir to appoint him Master Mechanic for the new E&N Railway. He logged the shores of Shawnigan Lake, built several sawmills, and made (and lost) money in a number of ventures, including, at the time of the above events, a plan to bring power from the Sooke River to a cement works at the head of Saanich Inlet. In the last ten years of his life, he contributed many historical and geographical anecdotes to the *Colonist*.

[5]. **Fernando Brambila** (1763–1834), or to give him his original Italian name, Ferdinando Brambilla, was born in Lombard, and was trained as a professional artist at the Accademia di Belle Arte di Brera in Milan. He was recognized as one of the most skilled artists of the Malaspina Expedition, but he did not join the expedition until the ships reached Acapulco, Mexico, in December 1791, several months after their visit to Nootka Sound.

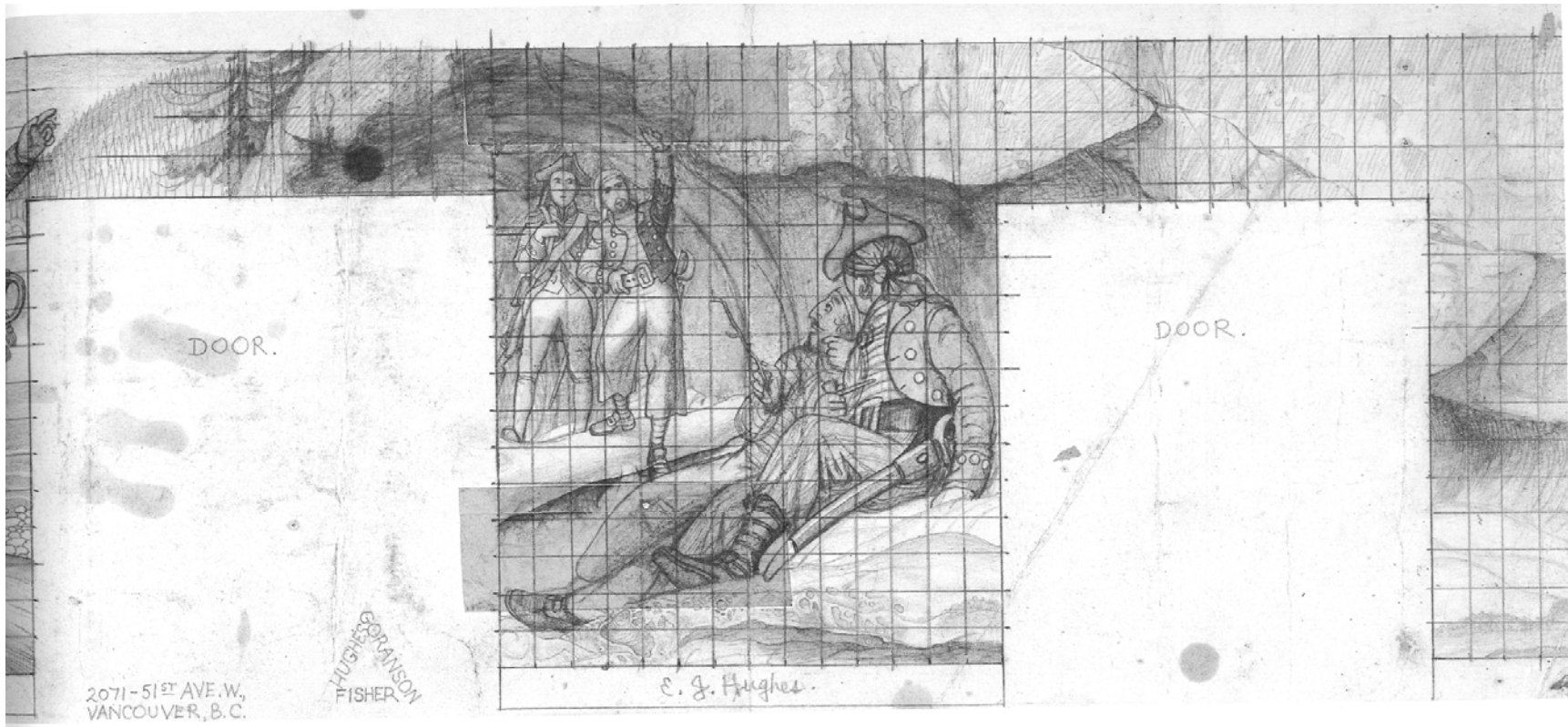
Brambila was assigned to recording landscapes, rather than working on any botanical or anthropological detail. His painting of the gallery was not surrendered to the Depósito Hidrográfico (the “trunk in the attic” of popular myth) until 1806, by which time he had probably lost touch with both Cardero and the by-then disgraced Malaspina.³⁷ Most likely, this was when Cardero's original sketch, which Brambila must have had, was lost.

³⁷ Peter Barber, in *Malaspina' 92, Jornadas Internacionales*, p.362, Real Academia Hispano-Americana, Cadiz, 1994.



Lieutenant [Captain] Malaspina sketching the Malaspina Gallery in 1771[1791]—a design by Edward J. Hughes for one of several murals commissioned in 1938 by the Malaspina Hotel in Nanaimo. Hughes' fellow artists were Orville Fisher and Paul Goranson, and the three made up the Western Brotherhood. The murals were subsequently defaced and badly damaged during post-war renovations. What remains of them is in storage pending decisions on their restoration and the location of a suitable site for their display (Dunae, 1999) (Reeve, 2000).

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... *the Malaspina Gallery*—another part of a study by Edward J. Hughes for murals in the Malaspina Hotel in Nanaimo. The artists received no remuneration for their work, but they were ensconced in one of the hotel's top floor suites and given free choice from the hotel's extensive menu.

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Vista de la Costa del Estrecho de Mulgrave con una galería natural

Museo de América No. 2.273

This painting by Brambila was the basis for the illustration in the book first published in 1884 that Davidson had acquired from Spain (*page 4*). Compared with the book illustration, the “potted plants”, *centre foreground*, are at a little earlier stage in their growth. Notice too how the Indian “mask” on the backwall of the gallery has been given less emphasis than in the later engraving. According to Peter Barber at the British Library, Brambila as an artist was not very good technically at figures. The portrayal of people in the Malaspina expedition’s paintings also sometimes reflects whether their purpose was entertainment, political, or scientific. Brambila was evidently sending the message here that relations between the Spanish and the Native people were entirely amicable.

The painting is labelled: “View of the coast in the Strait of Mulgrave with a natural gallery”. Port Mulgrave is in Alaska and was so named by fur-trader George Dixon in June 1787. The Malaspina expedition anchored there in June 1791. It is thanks to the editor of the book, Pedro Novo y Colson (1846–1931), a Spanish naval officer who corrected the title, that the hunt for the gallery didn’t start that far north.

[6]. **Manuel José Cardero** (1776–?) was born in Écija, Córdoba, Spain, but nothing else is known of his life until he sailed with the Malaspina expedition of 1789–1794. He travelled in the *Descubierta*, probably as a servant. He showed an aptitude for drawing early on in the expedition, and he was consequently detached from the main Malaspina expedition in Acapulco and told to join the Galiano-Valdés expedition of 1792 as a cartographer and artist. After the voyage, Cardero returned to Spain, and was with Valdés for a time.

When Malaspina got back from the Pacific, Cardero turned over his drawings to him, but he was informed in 1795 that his services were not needed on the work of putting all the documents and maps of the voyage in order.³⁸ As it turned out, this was not a very smart decision. Several of Cardero's drawings were given titles that, if not wrong, are a continuing source of puzzlement.

José Cardero has three local geographic features named after him: Cordero (*sic*) Point on the Valdes Island side of Gabriola Passage (the name was mis-spelt by the British Navy); Josef Point on the Gabriola Island side opposite; and Dibuxante Point on the northwest tip of Valdes (the word nowadays spelt *dibujante* is Spanish for a draughtsman or illustrator). Not bad for someone who was only 16 years old at the time he visited Gabriola.

³⁸ Carmen Sotos Serrano, *Los Pintores de la Expedición de Alejandro Malaspina*, pp.125–138, Madrid, 1992.

John Kendrick, *The Voyage of Sutil and Mexicana 1792*, p.237, Arthur H. Clark, Spokane 1991.

Virginia González Claverán, *La Expedición Científica de Malaspina en Nueva España, 1789–1794*, pp.385–393, El Colegio de México, 1988.

[7]. **William John Sutton** (1859–1914) was born in Ontario and educated at both Columbia and Chicago Schools of Mines. He was a government assayer before he joined Robert Dunsmuir's enterprise as a surveyor and assessor. In the course of his work for Dunsmuir, he became a world expert on the mineral resources of western Canada, and built a comprehensive mineral collection (now at UBC). He is said to have been "a delightful raconteur".

[8]. **Peter Creeke Fernie** (1830–1915), born in Allonbury, Huntingdonshire, England, frustrated his family's plans for him to become an architect by running away from home when he was 18 to enlist in the British Army. He saw action in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, and after fifteen years of distinguished service, was discharged in 1861 with the rank of sergeant and many medals. He and his younger brother William came to Canada a year later, to prospect for gold near Fort Steele, but found all the claims staked. Peter then found employment with the Vancouver Coal Company in Nanaimo for three years. In 1868, he rejoined his brother in the Kootenays, where he raised cattle, was a superintendent of roads, a bridge contractor, and later co-developer (with William) of the Crow's Nest Mine and Railroad. Shortly after the mine was incorporated in 1889, he sold his interest and retired to Victoria, where he remained an active figure at many social events, until his death at the age of 84.

[9]. The Honourable **Archer Evans Stringer Martin** (1865–1941), born in Hamilton, Ontario, son of a QC, was educated at Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario and Ghent (Belgium). In 1889, he married Emily Mary Read, daughter of John Breakeridge Read of Osgoode Hall, Toronto. He was appointed to the Manitoba bar in 1887; the British

Columbia bar in 1894; representative of Minister of Justice to Vancouver Island in 1896; special commissioner 1897, 1900; the BC Supreme Court in 1898; the Appeal Court in 1909; and made Chief Justice of British Columbia in 1937. His career was not without controversy—his impeachment was proposed in 1907 and 1908, and suit brought against him in 1920.

He retired on his 75th birthday, promising to “write a book of reminiscences of the early days of the province”. In late August of the following year, he gave a presentation on the Spanish contribution to coastal growth. He died suddenly, a week later, his reminiscences unfinished. He had long since sold (in 1911, through E.O.S. Scholefield) his fine library of Northwest Coast materials to the province.

[10]. **Cayetano Valdés y Flores** (1767–1839) was born in Sevilla. On the recommendation of Antonio Valdés, who was his uncle and Minister of the Navy, he was accepted by Malaspina as an officer on the *Descubierta* (Discovery). Among his duties was the examination of the political archives of Spanish possessions in South and Central America. When, in 1792, the main body of the Malaspina expedition sailed to the Philippines, Valdés remained in Mexico and, with his colleague Galiano, led the expedition of the schooners *Sutil* and *Mexicana* to explore the Juan de Fuca Strait. After returning to Spain, he participated in the battles of Cape St. Vincent and Trafalgar. As one inclined to liberal politics, he was confined for a short time to the fortress of Alicante. Around 1820, still involved in politics, Valdés was elected Deputy for Cádiz to the Cortes, a parliament whose unfulfilled goal was to depose the absolutist monarch Fernando VII. As a result, Valdés was further persecuted and eventually exiled to England, where, at that

time, any enemy of France was welcomed. He returned to Spain in the 1830s and died in Madrid in 1839, aged seventy-two.³⁹

[11]. **James McLay** (1837–1918) was born in Scotland. He, his wife Catherine, and three children emigrated to Canada in 1872 and pre-empted 160 acres on Gabriola in 1873. Despite never having farmed before, the McLays grew superior produce, which often took prizes at local fairs. James always gave credit to “manure, and plenty of it!”—still a Gabriola slogan, though its originator may be forgotten.

James was secretary of the school board for many years, and also found time to write occasional articles and poems for the *Nanaimo Free Press*, to practice taxidermy and amateur astronomy. He was made Justice of the Peace in 1877, a role which he carried out conscientiously until his death on Gabriola at age 81. McClay Road (off Barrett) is named (incorrectly) for the McLay family.

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Box 63, Folder 1903: Letter Davidson to A. Martin, Oct.24, 1903.

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E E L89: W.E. Losee, Undated reminiscences

G G11 M36: Martin, Archer, Malaspina's Gallery—Gabriola Island, 1903–5

³⁹ John Kendrick, *The Voyage of Sutil and Mexicana 1792*, pp.233–235, Arthur H. Clark, Spokane 1991.

M.S. and illustrations. Referred to in the text as "Martin's journal" (photograph *right*)

G G11 M36c: Archer Martin: Correspondence re: Malaspina Gallery, 1903

MS-632: Correspondence of Justice Archer Martin 1888–1938

Box 3, File 1903-D (Letters to Davidson, Sept. & Oct.)

Box 3, File 1903-G (Letter to Good, Oct.24)

Vertical Files: "Gabriola"; W.S. Losee; "Malaspina"; Martin, Archer

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Canada Census for British Columbia: 1881, 1891, 1901: James McLay.

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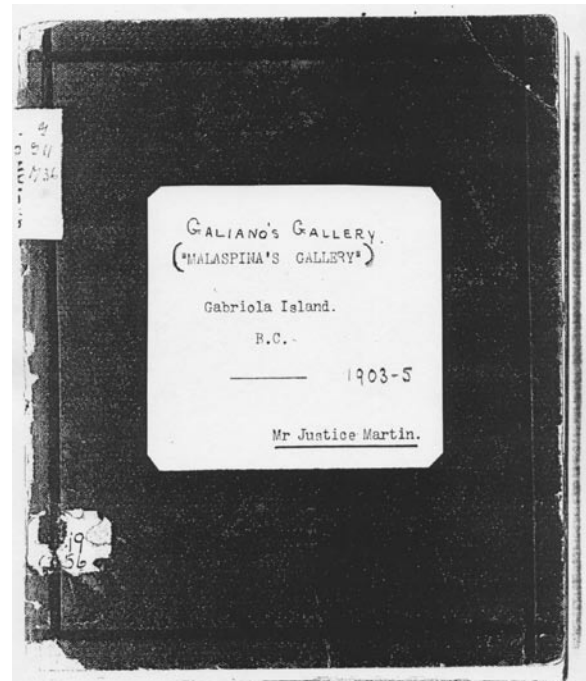
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