

A PEEK BACKWARD

We received a small clipping taken from the *San Francisco Examiner* for 30 January, 1914, and excavated by Calvin Malone. The item is titled "Wed Dusky Belles? Never, Say Sailors". The text begins with a subhead, "Wrecked Mariners Here, Declare They Fled From Matrimony".

"Chief Officer Jack Wilson and six members of the crew of the ill-fated schooner *Eldorado* arrived from Easter Island via Sydney on the steamship *Ventura* yesterday and indignantly denied that a single one had ever become the husband of the beautiful belles of the South Pacific islands. The mariners explained that more than one half of the 250 natives of the island were women. When the dusky maidens suggested matrimony the sailors fled for the shore and spilled into a small boat from the British steamer *Knight of the Garter* and left the

place for all time. Wilson and his men gave a thrilling description of their experiences from the time the schooner foundered. Although there was an abundance of tropical fruits, fresh beef and mutton on Easter Island, the men were glad to leave the place and return to civilization."

Earlier we published the account of the wreck of the *Eldorado*, as written by its captain, N. P. Benson. (see RNJ 15 (1):31-49). This frightening sea saga is an amazing story of survival in a small boat, following the sinking in a fierce storm – some 500 miles from Rapa Nui – of the *Eldorado*. In an astonishing feat of navigation and sheer grit, they made it to Easter Island, where they awaited rescue for many months. As Captain Benson noted in his book, all the sailors happily had moved in with the local women. However, clearly the returned sailors needed some "cover" once they landed back in San Francisco, facing their families, wives, and in some cases, loved ones. ☐

Early Visitors to Easter Island 1864-1877: The Reports of Eugène Eyraud, Hippolyte Roussel, Pierre Loti and Alfonse Pinart

A trip back through time. This collection of eyewitness accounts describes Easter Island as it appeared after the mid 1800s, following the disastrous slave raids and subsequent epidemics. Here we find a unique glimpse of the island in that period of time. These accounts were originally written in French: the missionaries, Eyraud and Roussel, wrote detailed reports for their superior of the Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in Paris; Pierre Loti arrived on a French warship, *La Flore*, and his contribution is in the form of a diary. Alphonse Pinart came on another French warship, *Seignelay*; his is more of an anthropological study. The missionary letters were the first to reveal life on the island, and although Loti and Pinart visited only a short time, they managed to observe and describe the island and its inhabitants at a tenuous time in history.

Previously available only in French, these four reports were translated into English by Ann M. Altman, Ph.D.

An Appendix compiled by Grant McCall lists all the known ship arrivals to Easter Island from 1722 to 1879, when there is one final mention of Father Roussel's return to the island. The number of ships that stopped off at Easter Island in those early days is astonishing, considering the isolation of this tiny island in the vast Pacific Ocean.

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EARLY VISITORS TO EASTER ISLAND 1864-1877



THE REPORTS OF EUGÈNE EYRAUD,
HIPPOLYTE ROUSSEL, PIERRE LOTI, AND
ALPHONSE PINART

TRANSLATED BY ANN M. ALTMAN, Ph.D.

EASTER ISLAND FOUNDATION