

Context:

18th-century history, west coast of Canada

Citation:

Doe, N.A., Flea Village—10. A second look at Cardero's drawing.

SILT 17-10, 2016. <www.nickdoe.ca/pdfs/Webp570.pdf>. Accessed 2016 Nov. 06.

NOTE: *Adjust the accessed date as needed.*

Most of this paper was completed in 2007 with the intention of publishing it in the journal *SHALE*. It was however never published at that time, and no further research has been since then. It was prepared for publication here in November 2016, with very little added to the old manuscripts. It may therefore be out-of-date in some respects.

It is 10 of a series of 10 articles and is the final version, previously posted as Draft 1.3.

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Date posted:

November 9, 2016.

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Flea Village — a second look at Cardero's drawing

by Nick Doe

[...continued from [File FV-569](#)]

The three field trips described in the previous three articles showed that Cardero's drawing, in the form we have it, is not a photographic-type image of Flea Village; however, it may well comprise elements that are closely related to Flea Village.

In summary, these elements are:

- the mountain on the right. Probably Mount Denman [FV-566](#) page 3 and [FV-567](#), pp.2–3;
- the scene at the beach. Probably the cove where the Spanish expedition stopped for the night a short distance from Flea Village [FV-568](#), pp. 5–6, 7;
- the “chief’s” house, in the British reports [FV-566](#), p. 6;
- the skeletons of houses matching the British expedition descriptions [FV-562](#); and
- the barricades, possibly a mistaken rendering of the backs of houses, [FV-566](#), pp. 7–9, 13.

We also have:

- the “potted plants” and tree, as an invention of Brambila [FV-566](#), pp. 11–12; and
- men on the hill [FV-566](#), p. 4, for sure a drawing made somewhere else.

The question now is, is it reasonable to suppose that Brambila used Cardero's sketches to compose a fictitious composite, the *Fortificación de los Indios* albeit without Cardero's active help in describing the subject matter of his sketches?

There are certainly several examples of Brambila adding details to Cardero's sketches, and often these have clearly been done without Cardero's help. These include canoes being paddles backwards (two examples) and an Aleutian kayak venturing out among dug-out canoes in the Johnstone Strait. Brambila also altered the trees, the positioning of the mountains, and even the posturing and clothing of individuals in canoes.

A study of how 18th-century artists on long voyages worked emphasised that, often, they did not have time to compose and complete large-scale works on the spot, and that instead, they would make small, detailed sketches of features such as rocks, trees, and mountains, to be used later.¹

As to the overall composition, artists had an advantage over cameras in that they could include in a single work, features not actually visible from a single vantage point, and they could also emphasise or de-emphasise features according to the dictates of interest, fashion, European expectations, and even in some cases political expediency.² The Cardero drawing certainly

¹ Doe, N.A., [Kayaking to Resolution Cove](#), *SILT* 10, 2014. John Webber and William Ellis on Cook's 3rd voyage used a study of the same distinctive rock in several of their drawings of Ships Cove in Nootka Sound, and depicted it in different locations. They also added mountains where they knew there to be mountains, even though the journals say the weather was bad those days or the mountains were unlikely to have been visible from the artists' vantage point.

² The artists of the Malaspina expedition sometimes showed crew members and indigenous peoples engaging in pleasant discourse - which may or may not have been an accurate rendering of actual

resembles what an 18th-century European viewer might expect a defensive site to look like.

For me, a powerful argument that the composition has been made by a classical trained artist without the benefit of having been to Desolation Sound, and on the basis of hurriedly-made sketches and perhaps a few perfunctory notes, is the work, *Stories from the Life of Joseph*, by Andrea del Sarto, circa 1515. The panel is in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence and Brambila must have been familiar with this work. The general resemblance of this work to Brambila's is, to my admittedly untrained eye, quite striking.

Finally let me add that the doctoring of pictures that don't exactly meet publisher's expectations and have to be modified is not something that does not happen anymore. There is an example below.

incidents. John Webber, in his panorama of Ships Cove, put Astronomers Rock, not on the actual rock, but on a significantly bigger bluff nearby. The plaques installed in modern times to commemorate the occasion are as a result on the wrong rock.

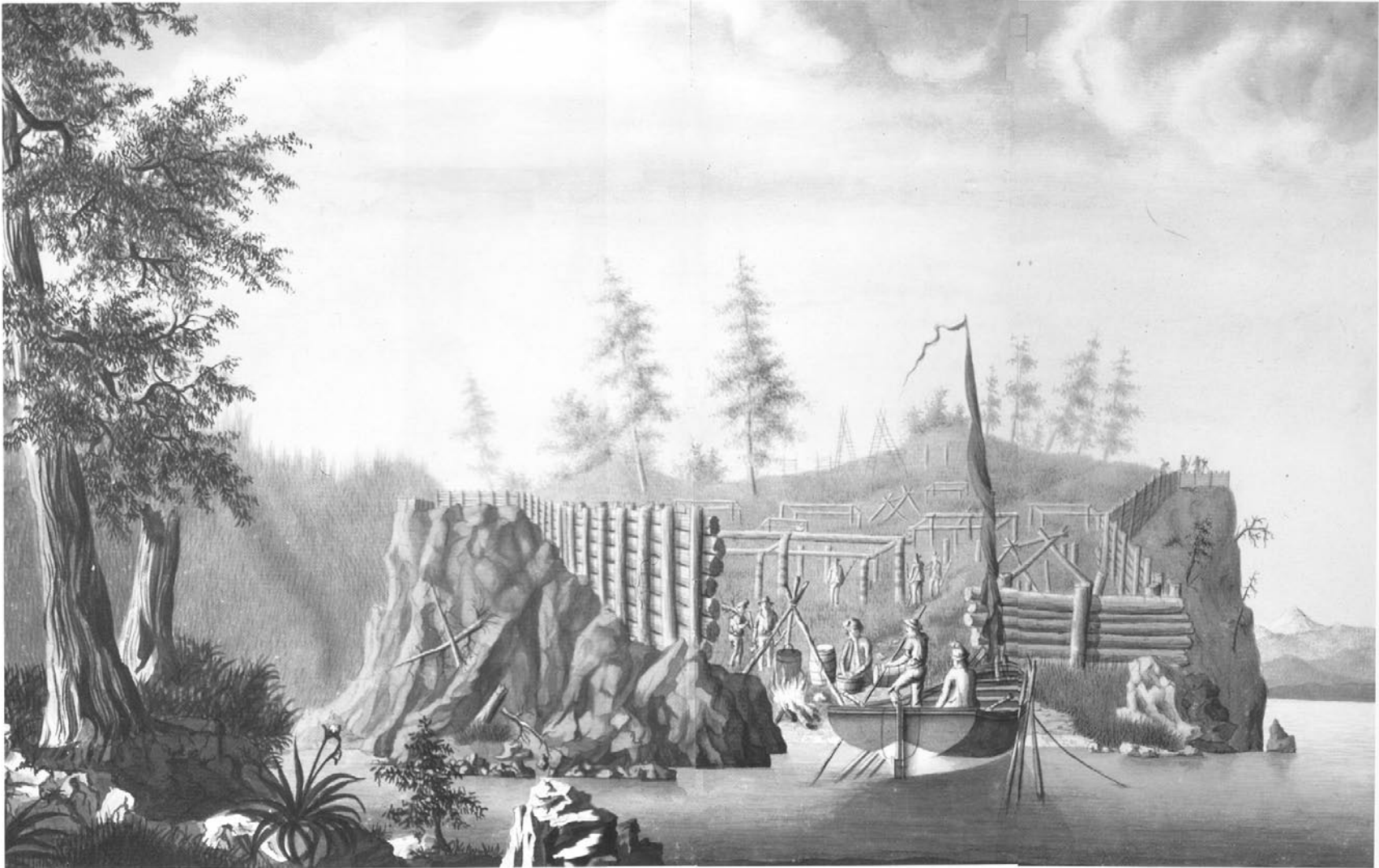
Right: Detail from a Cardero drawing before (top) and after (below) Brambila had worked on it. The standing figure in the canoe has a decidedly more classical bearded look after the make over.

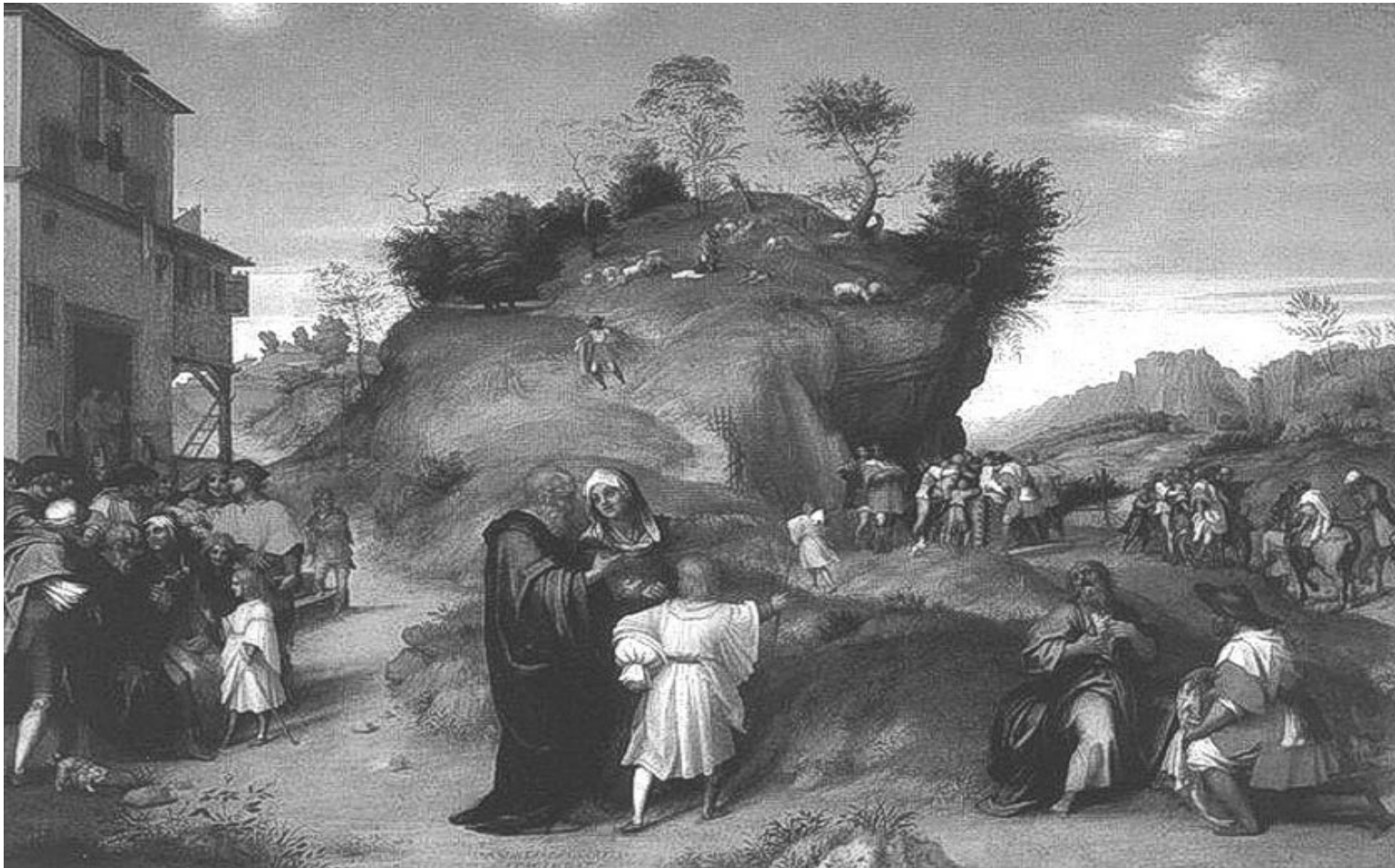
Below: Although Brambila (bottom right) has made extensive changes to the details of the trees and on-lookers in Cardero's drawing (bottom left), he has preserved some of the compositional detail—the line of the tree leaning to the right for example. The addition of a kayak however does not do much for his reputation for historical accuracy.



*top and bottom left, José Cardero, MUSEO NAVAL ms.1723-22
second from top and bottom right, Fernando Brambila, Museo América, No. 2.272*







From *Stories from the Life of Joseph*, by Andrea del Sarto, circa 1515. The panel is in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence. The Italian artist, Fernando Brambila (born Ferdinando Brambilla), must have been familiar with this work. Could it be ironic that Brambila chose the work he would have known as *Historias de la vida de José* as a basis for his adaptation and reworking of the sketches of José Cardero.

Perhaps there's a clue here as to why Brambila frequently put a tree in the foreground, with a strong preference for it being on the left rather than the right, a replacement for the building in this panel, and why the precipitous cliff on the right with distant mountains likely does not exist in the position shown in the *Fortificación* drawing. The panel even has a few "potted plants" in the foreground, and the outline of the top of the hillock in this panel is remarkably similar to that in Brambila's work.

CORRECTED MARCH 2019



Finally, mucking about with a picture for publication is something only an 18th-century artist might do. Right? Well, check this out.

On the left, a photograph of Desolation Sound, as it appears in the *Encyclopedia of British Columbia*, p.174 published in 2000. To get the real thing, you have to first mirror the picture horizontally—swap left & right, *middle*. ~~Then you have to remove those islands. Now it looks like the real thing, right.~~ That conspicuous triangular peak on the horizon is Mount Denman by the way, it's on the left...er, sorry, right.

CORRECTION: While the left & right switch is correct, the islands are where the photograph in the middle say they are. The viewpoint is a bit further south than originally imagined, not in Prideaux Haven. They are Otter Island, Morgan Island, Melville Island, Mary Islands, and in the foreground Curme Islands. Sincere apologies to the Encyclopedia for this careless mistake. My only excuse is that this view from the air is somewhat different from the one I experienced out on the water.

Articles:

[FV-561 Introduction](#)
[FV-562 Vancouver expedition accounts](#)
[FV-563 Spanish expedition accounts](#)
[FV-564 Historical accounts](#)
[FV-565 Archaeological reports](#)
[FV-566 Initial remarks on Cardero's
drawing](#)
[FV-567 Field trip #1, September 2003](#)
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[FV-569 Field trip #3, September 2007](#)
[FV-570 A second look at Cardero's
drawing](#) .

This concludes the series of articles. ◇