

The week we lay off the bar, we experienced much fog, and found the current strong, two and a half knots on the flood and ebb. The former runs to the southwest, the latter in the contrary direction. The roadstead may be considered a very unsafe anchorage, except in the fine season. The gales come from the southeast, with a heavy sea. By taking advantage of the flood tide, and standing off to the southward and eastward, there will be found little difficulty in getting off shore, to avoid the danger a vessel would be exposed to.

While engaged at this place, I felt great uneasiness for the safety of the boats, the officers employed having but little experience in managing them. The fogs and strong current rendered it extremely difficult to proceed rapidly with our survey: many of the boats were detained out over night, and others reached the ship with difficulty.

On the night of the 30th of January, the weather assumed a threatening appearance. The wind changed to the eastward, with a falling barometer; the sea rising, accompanied by a heavy fog, with the absence of three boats, caused me much anxiety. During the night the wind increased to a gale from the southeast. At daylight the Peacock made signal that the boats had reached her in safety. It had now become necessary for the squadron to leave this dangerous anchorage. Taking advantage of the tide, we effected it without difficulty, getting off under our storm-sails; three of the vessels were obliged to slip their cables. The barometer during the gale fell to 29.600 in., which was lower than we had seen it since our departure from the United States. Towards evening, when the weather moderated, we again sought our anchorage. One of the boats returned to the Vincennes with but half her crew; the rest, it was reported to me, had deserted. Two boats with officers were accordingly despatched for the purpose of apprehending them, as soon as we anchored. The men were found by the Guachos without difficulty. They accounted for their absence, that they had, while waiting on the beach, been enticed into the interior in chase of some game; and the fog coming on suddenly, they had lost their way, missed the boat, and were obliged to pass the night on the prairie. The boats in returning to the ships narrowly escaped accident in passing through the rollers on the bar, and it was with great difficulty they reached the ship at midnight. Their lengthened absence caused no little anxiety for their safety to all on board.

Dr. Pickering on this occasion at my request visited a cave he had mentioned to me as existing, for the purpose of ascertaining its temperature, believing it would give some more accurate information as to