

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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THE HOSPITALITY OF THE SPANISH GOVERNOR OF MONTEREY, PEDRO DE FAGES, TO THE ILL-FATED FRENCH EXPEDITION OF THE CONTE DE LA PEROUSE MONTEREY, 15TH — 24TH SEPTEMBER 1786

By Eric and Conchita Beerman

Ed. note: We have received from Eric Beerman another article referring to early events in Monterey, but now credit is due to both Eric and his wife Conchita. They research together in English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Italian. Then, as Eric writes, "I get left behind, and Conchita can continue on in German and Russian." The Beermans are working on material referring to the Micronesian Islands, and we hope they may find some reference to Monterey — as we know that some ships from here stopped at Guam in the early 1800s.

In the National Historic Archives (Archivo histórico nacional) in Madrid, Spain, there is an interesting letter from the Spanish governor of Monterey, California, Pedro de Fages, dated September 28, 1786, addressed to the Marques de Sonora (José de Gálvez), the powerful Spanish minister of the Indies. This important dispatch detailed the recent visit to Monterey of the ill-fated French round-the-world expedition of the Comte de La Perouse (Jean François Gallaup de La Perouse). Governor Fages had earlier received orders from the royal court in Madrid stating that he should expect a visit from two French frigates, *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe*, of the La Perouse expedition, although Fages could not be certain of the exact arrival date.

La Perouse was born to a noble French family, near the city of Albi, in the Provençal region, on August 22, 1741. At a youthful age of 15 years, he followed the family tradition and entered the naval academy to commence an illustrious maritime career. During the American Revolution, the *comte* served with distinction with the French fleet supporting the American Revolution, under the commands of the Comte d'Estaing and the Comte de Grasse. At the successful joint Spanish-French siege in 1781, of the British bastion of Pensacola, Florida, La Perouse commanded the French ship, *L'Astrée*, and for this service, he was decorated.

Peace did not come easily in 1783 to an energetic and adventurous naval officer. Thus, in 1785, La Perouse jumped at the opportunity to command the around-the-world expedition of the French frigates, *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe*.

The primary objective was to discover the Pacific side of the fabled Northwest Passage. The French king, Louis XVI, had the active collaboration of his cousin, King Charles III of Spain, as France did not have possessions on the Pacific Coast of the Americas, necessary to give the required logistic support to this naval operation. La Perouse's French naval service with the Spanish fleet in support of the American Revolution was an added attraction to be given this desired appointment.

On August 1, 1785, La Perouse boarded the larger of the two frigates, *La Boussole*, at the French naval base at Brest. The captain of this ship was Sir Clonard, while the *L'Astrolabe* was commanded by the Vicecomte de Langle (Paul Fleuriot de Langle). After an uneventful voyage, the ships put in at the Spanish port of Tenerife in the Canary Islands to replenish supplies and to give the crew a rest before the dreaded rounding of the Cape Horn at the tip of South America.

With good fortune, the weather was relatively benign as the two frigates passed without incident from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. At the end of January 1786, they reached the port of Concepción on the coast of Chile. La Perouse was personally greeted by the Spanish captain general of Chile, Ambrosio O'Higgins, whose son would later be Chile's hero of Independence in the struggle against Spain. The French spent two weeks at this delightful city.

Departing Chile with casks and stomachs full of water and fine Chilean wine, the expeditions next objective was the Easter Islands, more than 2,000 miles west in the Pacific Ocean with its marvelous Pre-Columbian monuments. These islands were reached on April 9, 1786. After a short stay, La Perouse set a northwestward course for the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands recently discovered by Captain Cook (though Spaniards lay some claim to this discovery by their Captain Juan Gaitan two centuries before in 1555.) These islands were reached on May 29.

After a reconnaissance, the ships set sail again on a northern course and reached Mount St. Elias on the coast of Alaska, 61° North Latitude, on June 23, 1786. This was the northern-most penetration of the expedition, and from this point the two frigates headed south and attempted to find the Pacific end of the Northwest Passage. La Perouse was not successful in this primary objective of the expedition. However, he did make maps, charts, and diaries, for which posterity is grateful.

On the evening of September 14, 1786, from a distance of six miles out in the Pacific Ocean, La Perouse was able to get an occasional view of the Spanish Presidio at Monterey, California. Fog was dense, so the Spaniards fired their cannons every 15 minutes so as to guide the French frigates to a safe anchorage. The following morning, a tired and discouraged French expedition finally reached Monterey. Governor Pedro de Fages gave a happy welcome to his distinguished guests, highly recommended by his own monarch. With the similarity of the Catalanian and Provençal languages, Fages and La Perouse were able to communicate effectively,

without the need of an interpreter, and established a warm relationship. When La Perouse gave the governor the Spanish royal order signed May 19, 1785 by Charles III, indicating all possible assistance to the French expedition, Fages was even more eager to please these rare foreign dignitaries and put his governor's home at the disposition of his visitors.

Pedro de Fages followed orders to the letter. Priority was given to the rest and the recuperation of the French crew and to replenish supplies for the coming long voyage across the Pacific Ocean to Macao, an island just off the coast of China. Esteban José de Martínez' Spanish frigate, *La Princesa*, was in the Monterey Bay awaiting repairs, but this had to wait until the the departure of the two French frigates.

The Franciscan missionaries from the nearby San Carlos Mission came to the Monterey Presidio to pay their respects. They invited La Perouse and Fages to dine at the mission as La Perouse had expressed interest in the Spanish mission system in California. During La Perouse's stay at Monterey, he was accompanied by the Spanish governor.

In a letter to the viceroy of New Spain, Conde de Gálvez (Bernardo de Gálvez), only nephew of José de Gálvez, Pedro de Fages told of the supplies he gave to the La Perouse expedition. It should be remembered that Bernardo de Gálvez was overall commander of the Spanish-French expeditionary force at the siege of Pensacola

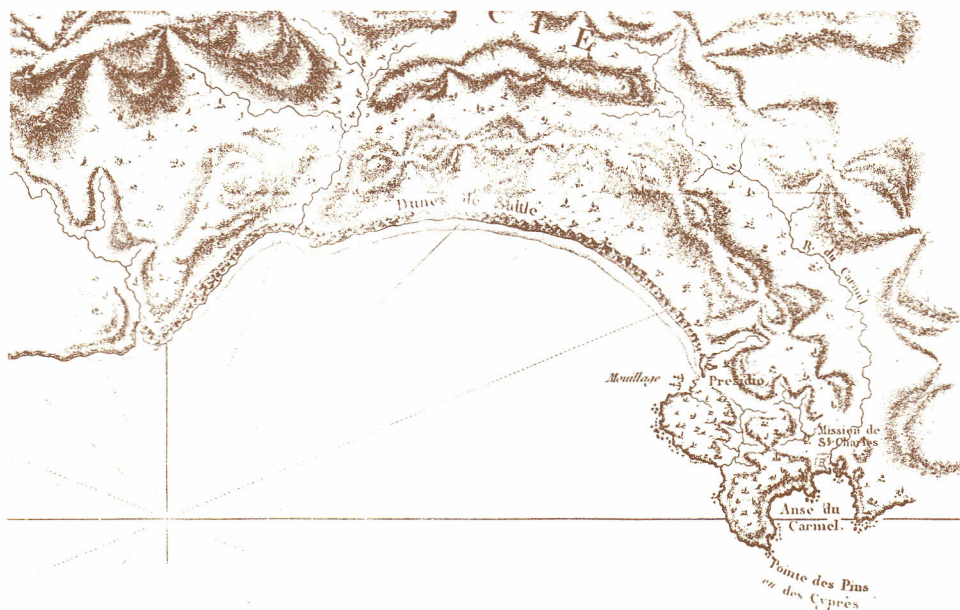


Engraving of Francois Galaup de la Perouse, Né en 1741 from Viage Pittoresco al Rededor del Mundo by M. Dumont D'Urville.

during the American Revolution, in which La Perouse also served. This is Fages' account of the supplies:

- 44 heads of beef
- 51 lambs
- 200 chickens
- 30 bushels of wheat
- 32 bushels of oats
- 8 tunny fishes
- 80 large sacks of various vegetables
- 4 carts
- 1 large can of milk daily
- daily firewood and dry grass

When the French expedition was preparing to depart Monterey Bay on September 24th, La Perouse seemed most grateful for Fages' hospitality and so instructed his French king. The Frenchman raved about the Spanish *cocina* (cuisine) of Monterey. La Perouse in turn offered seeds brought from France and from Chile which could be planted in the similar temperant zone of Monterey. Fages gave these to the San Carlos Mission and to the adjoining farms which would help to improve the agriculture of Monterey.



Portion of Plate No. 34-Baie de Monterey, from *Atlas Du Voyage de la Perouse*, edited by Milet-Mureau, Paris 1795 (note the expanse of El Estero in the late 1700s – one arm came almost to the anchorage).

On September 24th, after farewells between La Perouse and Fages, the expedition headed out of Monterey Bay for the next destination of Macao, which was reached after a long voyage on January 3, 1787. Then La Perouse turned south to the Spanish naval base at Manila Bay, where he gave his crew and ships another needed rest. Next they headed north and explored the coast of the mainland of Asia and spent considerable time on the Siberian island of Sakhalin, exploring the commercial possibilities of supplying Russian furs to the vast Chinese market. La Perouse then departed the island and on an eastern course, he crossed the Sea of Okhotsk and landed at the port of Petropavlovsk, on the Siberian peninsula of Kamchatka. He instructed his valuable interpreter, the Baron de Lessups (Jean de Lessups), an ancestor of the future builder of the Suez Canal, to return overland from the Pacific Ocean, across Siberia and Russia to France to deliver this invaluable scientific data and maps, thus far acquired on the expedition. It was a providential decision as this information would have certainly been lost to posterity.

The two frigates then turned south to the delightful climate of the South Seas, enjoyable after the rigors of the Siberian winter. They reached Manua in the Samoan Islands, but the inhabitants were not as benign as the climate, killing the commander of the *L'Astrolabe*, Vicecomte de Langle, and ten of his crew. The two French frigates beat a hasty retreat and reached Port Jackson on the coast of Australia on January 26, 1788. A letter written there by La Perouse was the last word heard of the expedition until the later expedition of Captain Peter Dillon, 1826-1827, which found evidence of the shipwreck of the *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe* near the reefs of Vanikoro Island in the Santa Cruz island group. Monterey and the Bicentennial of the American Revolution would well to remember the Comte de La Perouse.



THE CELEBRATION OF THE FOURTH OF JULY 1850 IN MONTEREY

On June 6th, 1850 a petition from prominent citizens of Monterey was presented to the Council. A copy of that petition is still preserved in the historical archives of Huntington library in San Marino. With credit to them we give to our readers the text of this petition to celebrate the fourth of July in Monterey.

“Whereas, the approaching anniversary of American Independence is near at hand, And Whereas, In our Opinion it is a day that should be held sacred by every American — on which should be held up to the minds of the rising generation, the heroes of the Revolution & the authors of our federal constitution & the Union it established, As Patriots whom they ought to reverence. The works themselves as political institutions which deserve their veneration, and as Object of commemoration.

"We therefore pray, That your honorable body will make an appropriation for the purpose of defraying in part, the expenses necessarily to be incurred in making suitable arrangements for celebrating the 75th Anniversary of American Independence, at this City on the 4th of July next. City of Monterey June 6th, 1850.

The petition is signed with some twenty-three names, business men, lawyers, local officials, and even a few of the citizens of Mexican ancestry who had chosen to stay with the change of flag.

We do not know what amount, if any, was appropriated for the celebration, but we do know the celebration was held "with style." In the files of the Alta California in Sacramento the issue of June 12, 1870 had a letter written by a former resident of Monterey describing the 1850 celebration in which he participated.

The former resident wrote that 1850 marked the year Lieut. Sully designed arms of the City of Monterey which he painted to be used in the Fourth of July procession. Sully directed the whole ceremony, according to the news article.

Referring to the procession of July 4, 1850, the news article states: "It assembled in the plaza in front of the church, with the band of the 2nd Infantry at its head, preceded by the famous banner which was carried by a character whose modesty would probably be put to blush to see himself in print, the celebrated Dennis McCarty, or "the double-breasted child of the forest," as he called himself, who had gotten up for the occasion in leather breeches and top boots: there was also a mounted escort of young men wearing red 'bandas' or 'fajas' across the breast. It took up the march to the house of General Riley, who was waiting to receive it in full uniform, girded with the yellow sash won at Chapultepec. He was received with drums rolling and banners waving, and took his place in the line which wended its way toward Colton Hall. The ceremonies there consisted in reading the Declaration of Independence by Captain E.K. Kane of the Army, followed by a translation into the Spanish by Lieut. Hamilton; an oration by John A. McDowell...and some remarks in Spanish by the Rev. Padre Ramiriez, in his Dominican habit, with some national airs from the band. It was an unusually fine day and we were in fine spirits and our hopes ran high."

The writer of the news article explained, "It being the first Fourth of July after the adoption of the State Constitution, and as the times were flush in Monterey in those days, everyone was brim full of patriotism, as you may suppose, and we all looked forward to a glorious career for Monterey."

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

SPECIAL EVENTS: The Committee is searching for any unusual collection that members may have that would be enjoyed by the membership at large. Have you any "hidden talents"? Why not share them with your fellow Association members. Do you play a musical instrument? Are you a stamp collector? Do you collect rare paperweights or snuff boxes? Why not share them with us? Contact Nancy Morrow, 163 El Caminito, Carmel Valley, Calif. 93924. Several fine programs are now being planned.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS FOUNDATION is still comparatively new to many people. It is a private group to assist the State Parks Department to acquire new parkland and park facilities. The executive secretary, William Penn Mott, Jr., is well qualified to know projects that are of value — not available through tax funds — and their record to date is good. This Foundation started the fine series of Mission Music programs, one of which was given last year at Carmel Mission. Information may be obtained from the Foundation at 1706 Broadway, Room 610, Oakland, Calif. 94612.

GIFTS: Col. and Mrs. William Chapman have given fine quilts and pillow shams; also the goggles worn by Commodore Robert E. Perry on his North Pole expedition. From Henrietta and Stanley Pearce we have twelve fine Bavarian china serving plates. Mary Frances Singleton presented a dozen silver lustre demitasse cups, and Virginia Land gave a rose canton teapot and English porcelain turkey platter to Casa Serrano. Nelle Currie has supplied a pedestal to hold the Jo Mora sculpture.

IN MEMORIAM: Juliet Johnson Burkett, Crystal Mary Elizabeth Gold, Helen Green Halloran, Audrey Picard and Col. John Cyril Parker.

SLOAT LANDING: Remember that the annual Sloat Landing ceremony will take place July 5th, 1976. The time is 10:00 a.m. at the Presidio Sloat Monument, and 11:00 a.m. at the Custom House.

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT: With two thousand members our Association has so many projects continuing that the officers and Board — volunteers all — find they need regular steady assistance. Richard D. McFarland (Col. U.S.A. retired), is now at our headquarters office in the Maritime Museum with the title of Executive Assistant and Deputy Director of the Maritime Museum. He is indeed helpful to president Raymond C. Smith; and to Admiral Earl E. Stone in the Maritime Museum.

NEW MEMBERS: Lt. Col. & Mrs. Billy B. Wilson, Mr. & Mrs. Hugh H. Blakely, Miss Mary C. McHale, Brig. Gen. & Mrs. D.F. Packard, Mr. & Mrs. Everett R. Castanos.

Mr. & Mrs. Roger Bailey, Mr. & Mrs. George L. Bevan, Mr. & Mrs. G.F. Craig, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Larry T. Durocher, Mr. & Mrs. Sam Farr, Mrs. Earl Grady, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Land, Mr. & Mrs. Edward E. Magner III, Mr. Robert R. Marble, Miss Anne Martin, Lt. Col. Horace S. Mazet, Col. & Mrs. Richard D. McFarland, Mr. Jara Stephan, Miss Felicitas Titus, Mrs. Julia F. Wenner.

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