

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 30, 1949

For many years Thomas W. Norris of Carmel has been issuing most unusual and prized Christmas cards, many of which are now collector's items and most of which have been published by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco. The first one to come to the writer is dated December 25, 1936 and is a reproduction of Jackson's Map of California in 1850 with Appendix.

The 1949 card is a booklet reprinting the letter of Sebastian Viscaino written from Monterey on December 28, 1602, and sent to new Spain by the Almiranta.

Mr. Norris greets his friends with the following explanation of his Christmas card on introductory pages: The letter of Captain Sebastian Viscaino to Count de Mont-Rey, Viceroy of New Spain, is of special interest to all Californians. Captain Viscaino may have given vent to enthusiasm in some respects, but we residents of the Monterey Peninsula agree that he was not too far wrong in his description. The name of his sponsor has been perpetuated in naming the bay, Monterey, otherwise he might have been forgotten.

The letter follows:

Your Highness will have had notice of how the Count de Monte-Rey, viceroy of New Spain, in conformity with the orders which he has from His Majesty, charged me with the exploration of the harbors and bays of the coast of the South Sea from the port of Acapulco to Cape Mendocino, giving me for that purpose two ships, a laucha, and a barcoluengo, together with seamen and soldiers, arms and ammunition, and provisions for eleven months; that, in accordance with the orders given me for that end, I sailed from Acapulco on the 5th of May of this year; that I have prosecuted said exploration, although with great difficulty and labor, because the navigation was unknown and head winds were constant, while the aid of providence and the good desire I have ever felt for serving His Majesty availed me little. I have discovered many harbors, bays and islands, as far as the Port of Monterey, a harbor which is in thirty-seven degrees of latitude, surveying all and sounding, and noting the sailing directions, according to the art of navigation, without neglecting any substantial thing concerning the same, and noting the land and the numerous peoples dwelling therein

seemingly promise. I send a copy to the said Count, in order that he may transmit the information to His Majesty and to your Highness. As to what this Harbor of Monterey is, in addition to being so well situated in point of latitude for that which His Majesty intends to do for the protection and security of ships coming from the Philippines.

In it may be repaired the damages which they may have sustained, for there is a great extent of pine forest from which to obtain masts and yards, even though the vessel be of a thousand tons burthen, live oaks and white oaks for ship-building, and this close to the seaside is great number. And the harbor is very secure against all winds. The land is thickly peopled by Indians and very fertile in its climate and the quality of the soil resembling Castile, and any seed sown there will give fruit and there are extensive lands fit for pasturage, and many kinds of animals and birds – as set forth in the report referred to.

I advise His Majesty concerning the great extent of this land and its numerous population, and what promise it holds forth, and what the Indians have given me to understand concerning the people of the interior and how gentle and affable the people are, so that they will receive readily, as I think, the holy gospel and will come into subjection to the royal crown and since His Majesty is lord and master of all, let him provide as many seem best to him. As to what it behooves me to do on my part, I will serve him till death.

With regard to having delayed longer than the time which was thought necessary for this exploration; Because of the many difficulties of which I have spoken, the greater part of the provisions and ammunition which was furnished to has been expended; while, owing to the great labors which my crew have gone through, a number of men have fallen ill and some have died- so that by making the exploration at this time as well as the region of Cape Mendocino as of the entire littoral of the Californias as is called for by my orders, I have met with obstacles to the completion of all the work without considerable succor in the way of provisions, people and ammunition, and speedy dispatch of these. Let the admiral be advised by the said Count of this, he asking him for what is necessary, and letting him know to what place and at what time he must dispatch these things to me (sending to him also the map, report and sailing directions concerning all I have done in said exploration to the present time) so

that Your Highness may order that the same be sent to me.

I trust in God that I may do a great service to His Majesty and that I shall discover great realms and riches. Of all that may be done I shall advise Your Highness, as opportunities for doing this may present themselves, With truth and faithfully, May Our Lord guard Your Highness, a ward so necessary to the Christian. I am the servant of Your Highness.

SEBASTIAN VISCAINO,
28th December, 1602,
Harbor Monterey.