

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 9, 1950

Monterey Presidio in 1792

The "Discovery" arrived in Monterey on the 27th of November, 1792, with Archibald Menzies on board. He had accompanied Captain George Vancouver on the voyage around the world which took them away from their native land from 1790 until 1794.

The journal which Menzies kept of the events and descriptions of the various places which they visited is now in the British Museum, and a certified copy is preserved in the national archives in Victoria, B.C.

While the Discovery was at anchor in Monterey Bay Captain Vancouver made a selection of "such articles of the Trade as we had on board as he thought would be useful to the settlement and sent them on shore to the Governor to be divided between the Garrison and the surrounding Missions in whatever manner he thought would be most beneficial to the country in general," wrote Archibald Menzies in his diary of his stay here.

"But on the 16th we found," he continued, "that his manner of sharing out these donations had excited a good deal of discontent. The Fathers in particular complained of their not having received so liberal a share as those at San Francisco and Santa Clara. At the same time the soldiers were entitled to every liberal return we could make to them for the great trouble they were at in traversing the country and hunting down cattle for our daily consumption and horses for our common amusement, in short for their cheerful and ready compliance with whatever could contribute to our accommodation."

Evidently there was not enough poultry, vegetables, etc., in Monterey and the surrounding country, for Menzies reports that on the 26th the small Schooner returned which had been sent a few days before by Sr. Quadra across to the northeast side of the bay on our account to "collect sea stock for us such as poultry, vegetables, etc., at the Mission of Santa Cruz. They brought about 100 fowls and a quantity of vegetables that were shared between the two vessels and a large quantity of Indian corn for feeding them and the live stock and sheep which we were to carry with us to stock the Sandwich Islands with these useful animals as the opportunity we had now of procuring them was so favorable.

"... This being their Christmas Day, a large party of us dined on board to celebrate it with festivities. Most of the guests found it necessary the next day to shake off the effects of the debauch by a long ride, after which we met at dinner at the Presidio and were entertained with a bull fight in the area within the Garrison," reports the author of the log of the journey around the world.

Even in those far-off days the water situation in Monterey was not the best, for Menzies writes: "Water was rather a scarce article in the vicinity of our anchorage. We however met at this time with very good springs of it by digging in the hollow places on the hilly ascent abreast the vessels."

It is interesting to note in the Journal that there were many natives around Monterey and vicinity and that outposts were used, with a number of soldiers at each, to keep peace and to protect the community and those who dwelt here.

Menzies writes: "... In the interior parts of the country we were told the natives were very numerous but that the Spaniards never suffer any large parties to collect about the settlement except such as are peaceably inclined... To guard them from any sudden alarm, they have outposts a few leagues off where soldiers are stationed at the different passes to watch their motions and give timely intimation to the Garrison in case of any hostile appearance. One of these outposts, about five leagues to the eastward of Monterey, frequently terminated our ride; it was guarded by 6 or 7 soldiers and situated by a large rivulet that emptied itself into the bottom of the bay and on the skirts of a fine plain about two leagues wide and of such an extent inward in a southeasterly direction that its termination still remained unknown to the Spaniards ... This caution was necessary as there did not appear to be above 300 soldiers for the defense of the two Garrisons and four adjacent Missions."