

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **The Mission's First Harvest Was Sparse**

To the Academy Scrapbook, published by the Academy of California Church History, at Fresno, California, we are indebted for the very interesting and historical story of the founding of Carmel Mission. The article is a translation of a manuscript written by Fray Junipero Serra some two month before his death, about the mission where he passed his last days and where he lies buried.

Last, Friday we quoted from the history the arrival of Father Serra, his life with other priests in Presidio of Monterey, the division of the possession between the Presidio and the fathers after one year living together, the removal to the site of the Carmel Mission and beginning of that church. Today we will continue with the progress of Father Serra and his faithful followers, in the establishment of the Mission chain.

'In 1772, this mission's baptisms reached 23. In the last half of the past year, we added only three and in the whole of this year only eight. wrote Father Serra in his diary. "This was due to the scarcity (of provisions) during the last two years. This year things were worse because no boat reached Monterey. Neither of the two which came (to California) was able to proceed here and ported at San Diego. We passed the time erecting around the buildings a stockade of stout, closely set palings, with ravelins in the corner of the square. We also furnished the buildings, added some (new ones) and started a garden to help with its vegetables. No (other) sowing at all was done this whole year.

"Before definitely establishing (the mission) here, the first concern was to have men familiar with farming see and state whether it would be easy or difficult to take water from the river for irrigating these lands. All agreed that it would be (easy). Now when we talked about its accomplishment, they all reversed themselves and declared (Irrigation) impossible. This was the chief, if not the only, reason why there was a delay about the sowing. We were much disturbed until finally, in the next year and thereafter we were determined to dry farm. This (decision) was both wise and fruitful, and shall be seem from the harvests of the following year."

To continue with the report of Father Serra, he writes: "This year we got news of the arrival of both vessels at

San Diego. (It was) at a time when scarcity had (prostrated) the Presidio and the new (northern) missions, this one and San Antonio, which had been founded one year earlier."

In great consternation, Father President Junipero Serra decided to accompany Commander Don Pedro Fages on the (latter's) trip to San Diego in order to use his influence also in procuring aid for the religious and the missions. He left Carmel Mission for the trip on St. Bartholomew's day, August 24, the first anniversary of the first mass of this site.

On his way he founded, September 1, Mission San Luis Obispo, in the same place where it is today, (but) "under such unjustifiable circumstances that it should have be considered folly had it not been justified by charity and trust in God, Who, in fact, did not abandon the agents of such a holy enterprise as He had promised everyone: He who trusts in Him shall not be confounded."

The Father President decided that the state of things demanded better provision for the maintenance and advancement of these new establishments and, with the advice of the religious present, he made the sacrifice of embarking to Mexico to seek aid from His Excellency, the new viceroy. He sent from there a religious, who would take his place here, and gave him strict orders to trust in the Lord and proceed with the work of God in things both spiritual and temporal, etc. The Father President embarked in the middle of October and the other came up to take his place. The vessel arrived at the end of the year with regular provisions.

In 1773 Father Serra records that there were 134 baptisms, which with 31 preceding total 165. Twenty-six marriages of new Christians were celebrated. With the two that they had before, these made 28 neophyte families belonging to this mission.

Toward the end of 1773, three pecks and one quart of wheat had been sowed with great difficulty and on ground only half cultivated, because as yet there was no way to plow. Despite the entire absence of irrigation they harvested five bushels, four pecks, and three quarts of good wheat. From half a quart of barley, they gathered three pecks, and from two pecks of Indians corn, four and one-half bushels. Horse beans, chick peas, a little of each was sowed, but all this was lost. Such was the first and harvest of this mission.