

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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October Days in Monterey

Now October is upon us! It was in this month that Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator in the service of Spain commanding two vessels, the San Salvador and the Victoria, entered and discovered San Diego Bay and then sailed up the coast and sighted Monterey Bay on November 16th, 1542.

One-hundred and eighty-two years ago tomorrow, October 3, 1769, Portola, seeking the Port of Monterey, reached Point of Pines, thus standing on the very rim of Monterey Bay without recognizing it. He camped a few days later on the present Pajaro River and on the 18th he crossed an arroyo at the present site of Santa Cruz and named it.

Father Junipero Serra sailed from San Diego for Mexico to plead the cause of California Missions on October 20th, 1772. He returned to San Diego on March 13, 1774, his objects attained.

On October 20, 1784 the first land grant in California was made by Governor Fages to Jose Maria Verdugo and was named Rancho San Rafael. The grant covered the present site of the cities of Burbank and Glendale in Southern California.

Mission de Nuestra Senora de la Soledad, or the "mission of Our Lady of Solitude," thirteenth Franciscan mission in California, was founded by Fathers Fermin Francisco Lasuen, Buenaventura Sitjar and Diego Garcia. Mission Soledad is now almost a complete ruin. It can be seen, the walls that are left standing, by taking the River road from the Salinas bridge and continuing on it south until the marker is reached.

The next important date in California history to happen in October was in 1816 – October 2 – was when Otto von Kotzebue, commanding the Rurik, anchored in San Francisco Bay. The Rurik had been fitted out at the expense of Russian Count Rumiantzof for an exploring party to the North Pacific. The Russians entertained the Spanish-Californians, and in turn were entertained at numerous fiestas. Three books by members of the expedition describe California at length. Kotzebue wrote "A Voyage of Discovery into the South Seas" and "Behring's Straits," published in London in 1821; Alfred Von Chamisso, a naturalist member of the party, published his "Riese Um Die Welt" in Berlin in 1856, and

Louis Choris, an artist, his "Voyage pittoresque autour de monde," in Paris in 1822.

The Russians returned and anchored in San Francisco Bay again eight years later on October 8, 1824, with Otto von Kotzebue again in command but with a different frigate, the Predpriatie, enroute to protect the Russian company on the northwest coast.

Jose Castro became "jefe politico," or governor of California on Oct. 8, 1835, following the death of Figueroa.

It was on Oct. 18, 1837, that Capt. Abel du Petit-Thouars, commanding the French frigate Venus, engaged in investigating the whale fisheries in California, sailed into Monterey Bay. He and his crew were welcomed and feted by Alvarado and his aides.

The French visitor's observations were mostly scientific, but he did gather and translate several original documents, publishing them in his "Voyage autour de monde sur la Fregate La Venus," which was published in Paris in 1840. Phil Townsend Hanna, in his book "California Through Four Centuries" says that his comments about the Spanish-Californians were restrained but favorable.

Two years later Capt. Cyrill Pierre Theodore Laplace, commanding the frigate "Artemise," arrived in California on Oct. 21. He was engaged in a hydrographic survey of the northwestern coast in the course of a voyage around the world. He visited Monterey and published a complimentary report in his "Campagne de Circumnavigation de la fregate l'Artemise" published in Paris in 1841.

Com. Thomas Ap. Catesby Jones, commander of the United States Pacific Squadron, took possession of Monterey on October 19, 1842, under the erroneous impression that the United States and Mexico were at war. He hoisted the American flag over the "castillo" and the Californians signed articles of capitulation without a struggle. Two days later, Com. Jones took down the flag, restored the town to the Californians, fired a salute to the Mexican flag, and sent a message of apology to Gen. Manuel Micheltoarena at Santa Barbara, then on his way north from Mexico to take over the governorship.