

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Spanish Lion And the Mexican Serpent

Out here in California, far removed from conniving and oppressing viceroys, missions, presidios and pueblos thrived. Huge herds of cattle ranged over emerald hillsides and great rancho sprawled in riotous pattern from San Diego to Sonoma. Here was peace and plenty; here was Arcady. So wrote Phil Townsend Hanna in "California Through Three Centuries,"

Then the storm broke. The Spanish lion succumbed before the Mexican serpent. The rapid transition from Spanish province to empire, to republic, ushered to three decades of insurgency in California.

President Polk appointed John Slidwell of New Orleans secret agent to Mexico to negotiate the definition of a permanent boundary between the United States and Mexico through the purchase of upper California and New Mexico.

Now we will continue with the important October dates, begun yesterday, in the history of California, Oct. 17, 1845, the then Secretary of States James Buchanan, instructed United States Consul Thomas Oliver Larkin in Monterey to encourage the Spanish-Californians to resist French and English overtures, and intimated that should California decide to declare her independence from Mexico that the United States would render her its "kind offices."

Capt. William Mervine, for whom Fort Mervine was named commanded a group of American sailors in attacking California insurgents under the command of Capt. Jose Mara Flores at the battle of Dominguez Rancho, on Oct. 8, 1846.

Then came the gold rush to California and pioneers crossed the mountains and came around the Horn in the search for gold. It was Oct. 31, 1846, that the Donner overland party, destined for California, and entrapped by snows in the Sierra Nevadas, was forced to establish camp in the vicinity of Truckee and Donner Lake of the present day. Thirty-nine members of the party of 87 perished from illness, cold and starvation before being rescued by four relief expeditions sent out from Sutter's Fort at Sacramento.

Joint boundary commissions of the United States and Mexico established the southern border between Mexico and California on Oct. 10, 1849, as a marine league south of the Bay of San Diego, whence it was to run in a straight line easterly to the confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers.

Oct. 13, 1849, was a great day in Monterey. On that day California's first constitution was adopted by delegates elected to a constitutional convention held in this city. The constitution, similar to those of New York and Iowa, established the boundaries of the state, provided for the election of executive legislative and judicial officials created a system of taxation and ordered the foundation of public schools.

In October, 1849, the first meeting for the organization of a Democratic party in California was held in Portsmouth Square in San Francisco, and the first lodge of Masons was founded in California at Denton City. The grand lodge was established in April, 1850.

Two important dates were added to California history during October of 1849 which were of special interest to the residents of Monterey. The first news of the admission of California to the Union reached here Oct. 18, with the arrival of the mail steamer Oregon. A formal celebration of the event was held in San Francisco on Oct. 29 when a new star was added to the flag flying in the plaza.

On Oct. 24, 1861, the Overland Telegraph line built westward from Omaha and eastward from Placerville, was joined at Salt Lake City and the first transcontinental message was transmitted.

Sixty-one years ago yesterday—Oct 1, 1890, Yosemite National Park was established by an act of Congress to preserve a valley of unusual beauty created by glacial action, waterfalls, big trees and wild life. The park contains 1,176.16 square miles. The valley was discovered in 1851 by Major James D. Savage, who led an expedition into the Sierras in pursuit of marauding Indians. On the same day General Grant National Park was also created by an act of Congress to preserve remaining specimens of big trees (*Sequoia gigantea*) the park is four square miles and contains General Grant tree, 267.4 feet high and 40.3 feet in diameter.

Another Oct. 1, 1891, date of great importance to California was the opening exercises of Leland Stanford

Jr. University, founded by Mr. & Mrs. Leland Stanford as
a memorial to their son.