

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 29, 1951

December Remembrances

The christening shawl of Robert Louis Stevenson is the latest acquisition at the Stevenson House. It is the generous gift of John Howell, San Francisco's well known book dealer, who acquired it from a previous owner and has sent it to Monterey to be added to the rapidly growing collection of Stevensoniana in the old adobe building on Houston street now an historical State monument.

This original flannel scarf was used at the christening of R.L.S., born November 13, 1850 and christened a few days later, according to the note sent with the gift. It is white, with his initials embroidered in one corner. A statement signed by the previous owner states that the scarf was made and embroidered by Stevenson's nurse, a Mrs. Balfour, of Collington Manse, Edin[g]burgh, Scotland. She gave it to a relative, Sarah Bigwood, age 14, to make a doll's mantle. She died in London April 2, 1918, at the age of 82 years.

Mr. Crossland, an officer of the First Life Guards Regiment, obtained the scarf in 1897, came to America after the Queen's Jubilee, thence to British Columbia and Australia. Later Sgt. Robert McIntoch was the owner of the scarf in San Francisco. He traded it to Frank Lewis Girard in September, 1921 and Girard sold it to John Howell. The latter has now given it that all visitors to the Stevenson House in Monterey may enjoy seeing it.

So much for a mixture of old times and happenings of the present. May we now turn to the happenings of December dates of the past which have made history for the Peninsula and California.

Although Sebastian Vizcaino first saw California on November 10th in 1602, it was not until more than a month later on December 16th that he anchored in Monterey Bay. The next day he landed and mass was said by the friars. The port was then named "Monterey" in honor of Gaspar de Zuniga Y Acevedo (Count of Monterey), Ninth Viceroy of Mexico. Does that call for a celebration? One hundred and sixty-eight years later, Monterey became the site of the principal presidio, as well as the capital of California, and the location for the chief mission in the chain of such establishments founded by the Franciscan missionaries.

The next December date for this locality to remember is December 7, 1769, when a council was held by the Portola expedition at its camp beyond the Carmel River near Point Lobos to determine whether to continue in search for Monterey or return to San Diego. It was decided that all should retreat, as supplies were running low. They started south on December 10th. On December 14, 1944, a huge cross of redwood was placed on the site with the Monterey History and Art Association sponsoring the ceremony. The cross and its execution had been the work and donation of Harry Downie, the curator of Carmel Mission. It is sixteen feet high with a cross beam of ten feet.

December dates affecting Monterey and this vicinity do not again appear for recognition until December 31, 1814 when Lieut. Colonel Pablo Vicente Sola was appointed governor to succeed Capt. Jose Arguello who had functioned as acting governor since Arrillaga's death on July 24, 1841. Sola arrived in Monterey to take over his duties on August 30, 1815.

After a succession of governors following the conquest by Mexico, Juan B. Alvarado was appointed and declared governor on December 7, 1836. He succeeded Jose Castro who, as president of the diputacion, had served since the surrender of Nicholas Gutierrez on November 5, as both governor and commandante-general. M.J. Vallejo had succeeded Castro to the latter office.

Then came the American period and the discovery of gold in California, and December 5, 1848 brought the publication of President James K. Polk's annual message to authenticate the reported discovery. December 20, 1849, Peter H. Burnette was inaugurated first American governor of California. He had emigrated from Missouri to Oregon in 1843, came to California in 1848 and worked for John Sutter.