

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Mark of Gratitude

Don Jose Figueroa, commandant-general and political chief of upper California, concludes his manifesto to the Mexican republic with the statement: "The greatest question treated in the manifesto is not merely of local, but of national interest – it is a refutation of the anti-social doctrines with which it was sought to corrupt the virgin California, in order to water with blood her fields of peace and fertility, destroy the riches of her missions, sow anarchy and open the ruins of the territory for the political hypocrites, patriarchs of revolution and disorder to seize upon the abundant wealth of the Indians acquired by their personal labor under the direction and evangelical patience of their venerable missionaries." This was written in 1835 in explanation of his opinion and actions as acting governor of the Californias.

While this manifesto was in the press at the shop of citizen Augustin V. Zamorano, in Monterey, on the 29th of September, 1835, "the general of the brigade, Don Jose Figueroa died," according to a note at the end of the publication. In consequence of this mournful event, the Most Excellent Deputation resolved that the proceedings which follow, should be inserted in the pamphlet.

The proceedings were designated to perpetuate the memory of Don Jose Figueroa. He was named as the "protector of the territory, the father of California, a friend, a mentor. He was acclaimed as one to whom agriculture owed its security and extension, commerce its protection, he consoled the widow, protected the orphan and succored the soldier; protected merit and fostered learning; in a word, he labored to organize the social order of the Californias," to name but a few of the compliments paid to the chief following his death, by Juan B. Alvarado.

It was asked in the proceedings of the Most Excellent Deputation, that a portrait of General Don Jose Figueroa should hang in the Hall of Sessions of this Most Excellent Deputation, in proof of the esteem which it has ever entertained for his distinguished merit. Also that there be erected a durable monument, with a suitable inscription, in one of the most public places of the capital (Monterey), and to that end, that the illustrious Ayuntamiento (Council) be appealed to, with

transmission of the proceedings, in order that all may be accomplished under its care and direction in the manner to be anticipated.

The committee on government examined the proposition of Senor Alvarado, and moved that the Most Excellent Deputation do all in its power for the memory of Don Jose Figueroa. They wrote in a reply to the request: "That a portrait of the general be hung in the hall of sessions, that a durable monument, with suitable inscription upon it, be placed."

At the foot of the portrait of the general the Most Excellent Deputation requested that he be given the title of benefactor of the territory of upper California, and on the lasting memorial that the following wording be used: "To the eternal memory of General Don Jose Figueroa, political and military chief of upper California, father of the country, the Provincial Deputation and, the Ayuntamiento of Monterey dedicate this monument at the public expense as a mark of gratitude. He died in this capital on the 29th of September, A.D. 1835, and of his age the 43D."

We have not been able to ascertain if the memorial was ever erected and if so – where?