

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Landing-Place

This year – 1951 – is the 48th anniversary of California's acquisition of her fundamental historic landmarks.

The landing place of Sebastian Viscaïno (1602) and Fray Junipero Serra (1770) was purchased by the California Historic Landmarks League in 1902 and 1903 with funds raised by a San Francisco newspaper, through the generosity of William Randolph Hearst. Mrs. Laura Bride Powers, an official of the group, wrote the publicity, which included reciting the very dramatic work of a company working throughout the State. Mrs. Powers was later the custodian of the Old Custom House in Monterey and one of the organizers of the Monterey History and Art Association.

Although the complete records of the Landmarks League were lost in the San Francisco fire of 1906, it is known that over \$13,000 resulted from the interest shown in the project as proposed by the League. Mr. Hearst was the custodian of the funds and because all the money went from his hands to the seller, he has often erroneously been given credit for purchasing all the landmarks acquired at that time. It appears on the records that he "paid" for the properties, including the landing place in Monterey.

Joseph R. Knowland, newspaper publisher, historian and chairman of the California State Parks Commission, was the president of the Landmarks League; Mrs. Powers was the secretary and organizer. The group was able to acquire before the earthquake and fire, which deferred the work for a time, several basic historic landmarks, beginning with the landing place (Spanish period); then the Mission of San Francisco de Solano, Sonoma (Mexican period), then used for a barn – this the last Mission of the historic string. The third landmark acquired was old Fort Ross (Russian period).

When these three important sites and buildings had been acquired there was \$500 left, which went toward the purchase of California's First Theatre in Monterey.

Mr. Hearst held title to the properties from 1902-3 until the Legislature met in 1905, when they were turned over to the State. The California Historic Landmarks League was made up of about 16 organizations including the Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West, the California Pioneer Society, the Sons of

Pioneers, the Historical Society and the Knights of Columbus, according to notes left by Mrs. Laura Bride Powers. There was a chairman from each organization, usually the president. At that time John Lerman was the presiding officer of the Native Sons and it was through his enthusiastic interest and belief in the importance of acquiring the landmarks for posterity, that the parlors throughout the State of California gave the project their generous support.

In November of 1906 there was placed at the landing place of Captain Gaspar de Portola and Father Junipero Serra a new granite cross to replace the old wooden one which had been removed several months previous to make ready the site of the more permanent memorial.

The cross was unloaded at the Monterey depot and was soon placed on the foundation which had been awaiting its arrival. The donor was the late James Murray (the stepfather of Stuart Haldorn of Carmel), whose home on the New Monterey waterfront was long an admired landmark. The base of the cross is four feet in height and the cross itself is ten feet in length. The inscription at the base read: "Junipero Serra, 1770."

On June 3, 1949, another monument was placed at the landing place. A large natural granite boulder was put there and upon its face a bronze tablet, dedicating it to Portola, the discoverer of Monterey Bay, the founder of the Presidio of Monterey, in whose ships the Franciscan priests had arrived to perform the first Mass on the shores of California. Portola took possession of the land in the name of Charles III, King of Spain.

The boulder was placed and sponsored by the Monterey History and Art Association, under whose auspices it was dedicated on Monterey's one hundred and seventy-ninth birthday. The plaque was the gift of the California Centennial Commission.