

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 5, 1951

### **Month of March**

It will be interesting now that the month of March is upon us, to discover some of the important events which have taken place in Monterey and perhaps in California, during this month in years past.

It was on March 20, 1773, that Capt. Pedro Fagas, with Father Juan Crespi and a company of soldiers, left the Presidio of Monterey to explore the shores of San Francisco Bay by land. They returned to Monterey on April 5. They were said to be the first men, other than Indians, to view the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys.

On March 22, 1744, Juan Bautista de Anna reached San Miguel Mission on the first overland journey from Sonora to California.

Lt. Bruno Haceta, with Juan Perez as pilot, left San Blas, Mexico, in command of the second expedition to explore and take possession of the northwest coast of America. They reached Monterey on August 29.

It was in March of 1803 that Capt. William Shaler with the American ship, the Leila Bird, arrived at San Diego – the first sea otter hunting expedition to reach California.

A royal decree of the King of Spain partitioned California into Upper California and Lower California, and established the capital of the former at Monterey, with Jose Joaquin de Arrillaga as governor, on March 4, 1804.

California, through the "diputacion," ratified the constitution of "los Estados Unidos Mejicanos, March 26, 1825, and California thus became a territory of the new Republic of Mexico.

On March 10, 1840, the first Supreme Court of California or "Tribunal de Justicia," was formed by the junta departmental, setting under authority of the law of May 23, 1837. Juan Malarin, J.A. Carrillo, J.A. Estudillo and A.M. Osio with Juan Bandini and Mariano Bunilla were the judges.

The first discovery of placer gold in commercial quantities in California was made by Francisco Lopez, majordomo of Mission San Gabriel, in Placerito Canyon, eight miles west of Newhall in Southern California, on March 9, 1847.

Capt. John C. Fremont erected a fort and raised the American flag on Gavilan Peak, preparing to resist orders of General Jose Castro requiring him and his men to leave California, on March 6, 1846. It was on March 1 of 1847 that Col. Fremont was deposed as governor of California after serving 40 days. Kearney succeeded him.

On March 3, 1861, the Congress of the United States passed a bill establishing a land commission to investigate the validity of all Spanish and Mexican land grants in California and confirm the titles. Of the 794 grants examined up to March 1, 1856, 591 were confirmed and 203 rejected. These confirmations and rejections greatly affected the future of Monterey County.

March 25, 1851, Major James D. Savage discovered Yosemite Valley. Dr. L.H. Bunneel, surgeon of Major Savage's battalion, proposed the name of Yosemite after the tribal names of the Indians living there.

The University of California was established by act of the California legislature on March 23, 1868. The university financed from a congressional land grant, the sale of San Francisco Bay tidelands, specific appropriations by the legislature and gifts from individuals.

California's modern highway improvement program was inaugurated when Gov. James H. Budd signed a legislative act on March 27, 1895, creating a Bureau of Highways.

March 31, 1901, the Southern Pacific coast line was opened. The first daylight limited trains made runs from San Francisco to Los Angeles and back.

Statues of Father Junipero Serra and Thomas Starr King who saved California to the Union in the Civil War, selected as California's two eminent citizens – were unveiled in the National Statuary Hall, Washington, D.C. on March 1, 1931.