

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### California's Man-hating Amazons

When California was a fabulous island the women of the race of Amazons which were supposed to have inhabited the island, had the curious custom of wishing to be rid of the men. If any man was unfortunate enough to land on California's rocky shores word was at once sent to the queen, Calafia. She ordered the griffins to be freed from their cages and when set free, they would at once ounce upon the unfortunates and carry them in their great claws high to some rocky promontory and there feast upon them. Strangely enough, they were so trained that they never, by mistake carried away a woman—so the legend goes.

When James D. Phelan former mayor of San Francisco and a well-known pioneer of California, built his home on his estate near Saratoga in Santa Clara Valley, he built into the wall in the patio this legend as we have related it, and it is read by all who visit the residence which is now part of the San Francisco Art Institute.

For over 100 years all expeditions to California by the missionaries were made by sea. This western coast was so wild and little-known, that on our eastern shores a great university, Harvard, was flourishing and printing press was established and books were being distributed before the man was even born who was to clarify the simple geography of the coast.

A young Italian, Eusebio Kino, in whom the urge to roam was so strong, was born in 1645. In 1663, while lying ill "with a mortal sickness," he promised his saint, Francisco Xavier, that if he recovered he would bring the heathen light and would journey west of the Indies. He recovered, and kept his promise. An interesting result of this early bargain was the founding by Kino in later years of one of the most perfect missions in the southwest, the exquisite San Xavier Del Bac, near Tucson. The writer can testify to this statement, for I have visited this mission and urge anyone who should have the privilege of visiting Tucson to also visit this mission.

Kino had ten arduous years of study, as do all Jesuits of today, before he was allowed to set out upon his journeys. The Jesuits were the greatest travelers and the best geographers of their day. Kino went to the

great universities of Innsbruck and Heidelberg and absorbed their knowledge becoming consumed with a thirst to combine the conversion of the Indians to Christianity with accurate map making of the new world.

It was still many years before his ambitions were achieved. Not until 1698 did he actually prove that he could cross from the supposed mainland to the island of California by a land route. At least an almost land route with only the mighty Rio Colorado as a water hazard. On a historic day in October, the friendly Indians helped him make a raft of logs and lest he wet his feet, they placed upon it a huge basket. In this Father Kino embarked, taking with him only a blanket and his rosary and ferried across the Colorado to set foot upon the shore of California.

At this time the river ran high in a different course and Father Kino found beautiful and fertile green valleys and a tribe of prosperous and amiable Indians. Due to the illness and timidity of the friend who accompanied him, he was unable to stay but a few days in California, but in those few days, he climbed the highest peak he could find, and drew a map of the country around him. He was sure now that the island theory was a fallacy.

He was sure because of the little blue abalone shells the natives brought him from the coast because he had seen the sun rise over the gulf and because he found in these fertile valleys the source of supplies of the coast Indians. The coast Indians he knew, did not raise their own produce. It came of some inland source and no ocean was crossed in its delivery.

(More Tomorrow)