

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 1, 1951

### **Singing Their Own Requiem**

Today, August 1s, reminds us that it was this month in 1769 that Don Gaspar de Portola was on his way up the coast of California, seeking the port of Monterey. One hundred and eighty-two years ago tomorrow he camped on the present site of Los Angeles. He did not reach Point of Pines until October 3<sup>rd</sup>, thus standing on the very rim at Monterey Bay without recognizing it.

In view of the fact that today, August 1, marks the jubilee of Our Lady of the Angels of Porcuincola, Father Juan Crespi christened the camp site Los Angeles. An August 3, the party camped on the site of the present Brea Pits in Los Angeles. Thus Portola became the first white man to discover oil in California. Father Crespi called the location "the Spring of Alders of San Estevan."

San Buenaventura was named "La Asuncion de Nuestra Senora" because Portola and his party camped there on the eve of the Feast of the Virgin Mary which falls on August 14. Three days later they were at the present town of Carpinteria, the soldiers giving it the name. Here also they say signs of oil and so noted in their diary. On August 18 they arrived at Santa Barbara which Father Crespi called "Laguna de la Concepcion," and when they arrived at the site of the present Gaviota Pass the soldiers gave it that name because they had killed a sea gull there.

Father Francisco Palou established the first California boundary on August 19, 1773, and erected a cross defining the limits of Dominican and Franciscan territory, the former having been given jurisdiction over the missions of Baja California, and the latter over those of Alta California. Until a few years ago, the cross still stood on a knoll back of the Dominican mission of Nuestra Senora de Descanso, 30 miles south of Tijuana in the present Mexican territory of Baja California.

A Spanish royal decree established the capital of California at Monterey, with Felipe de Veve as governor, on August 16, 1775.

The father-president of all the missions of California, died at Mission San Carlos Borromeo, on August 28, 1784, and was buried before the altar in the church.

On August 17, 1833, the original decree ordering the secularization of the missions of California, was passed

by the congress of Mexico. The decree involved the installation of civil administrators to handle temporal affairs and the dispersal of Indian neophytes and others. The first mission secularized was San Diego (1833), San Carlos was fifth in 1834.

Agustin Zamorano of Monterey, California's first printer, issued the first major piece of printing undertaken in California, on August 9, 1834, when the governor, Jose Figueroa, issued his now famous "Reglamento Provisional para la Secularizacion de las misiones de la Alta California." By this decree aside from the problems of the missions, it provided that each head of the family be given a lot 100 to 400 varas square.

On August 15, 1846, there was much excitement in Monterey. The Californian, first newspaper to be published in California, made its appearance. It was owned by Robert Semple and Walter Colton and was to be published once a week.

It will be 101 years ago on August 21, that the Society of California Pioneers were organized in San Francisco, with membership limited to residents of, and arrivals in California prior to January 1, 1849. The society is still active and owns its own building on McAllister street in which they maintain a museum.

Walter Colton wrote of an amusing incident in his diary of "Three Years in California" on Wednesday, August 5, 1846. It read: "We have in one apartment in our prison two Californians, confined for having robbed a United States courier on his way from Monterey to San Francisco with public dispatches. They have not yet been tried. Yesterday they applied to me to have their guitars. They stated that their situation was very lonely, and they wanted something to cheer it. Their request was complied with and that evening, when the streets were still, and the soft moonlight melted through the grates of their prison, their music streamed out upon the quiet air with wonderful sweetness and power. They were singing, for aught they knew, their own requiem."