

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 3, 1951

September Days

Now that September 1951 is with us, it will be well to note the important happenings of California's past. The first September date of interest was in 1542 on Sept. 28, when Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator in the service of Spain, commanding two vessels, the San Salvador and the Victoria, entered and discovered the present San Diego Bay, naming it "San Miguel." Cabrillo and some of his men went ashore and engaged in a skirmish with the Indians. He thus became the discoverer of California.

It was on Sept. 7 in 1769 that Portola camped on a site near the present city of San Luis Obispo which he and his men named "Canada de los Osos" because the soldiers had encountered a number of bears there. The site still bears that name. It was not until Oct. 3 that Portola reached the Point of Pines, not recognizing Monterey Bay.

One hundred and seventy-nine years ago Saturday, Sept. 1, Father Junipero Serra founded Mission San Luis Obispo, the fifth of the missions in California.

On Sept. 14, 1786, Jean Francois Galoup de la Perouse, commanding the French frigates Boussole and Astrolabe, the first friendly visitors of distinction to California, arrived at Monterey. La Perouse stayed in California but 10 days. Through gifts to missionaries and military officials, he introduced the potato to California, it has been said. He provided an interesting and informative account of his observations in his "Voyages de la Perouse Autour du Monde" in Paris in 1797, an English translation appearing in London in 1799. There is a plaque erected to the memory of this explorer by the French government in the garden at the Carmel Mission.

A Spanish expedition under the direction of Alejandro Malaspina, in the corvettes Descubierta and Atredida, engaged in an exploring voyage around the world, arrived in Monterey on Sept. 13, 1791. With the expedition was John Groehm (Graham), first American in California. According to all records, Groehm seems to have died and been buried here on the day of his arrival.

It was Father Buenaventura Sitjar, a faithful and studious missionary, who compiled an Indian

vocabulary and a valuable report on suitable mission sites. He was the co-founder of San Antonio, Soledad and San Miguel Missions. Father Sitjar was born in 1739 in Mallorca, died at Mission San Antonio on Sept. 3, 1808, and is buried in the mission church.

Agustin Fernandez de Vicente arrived in Monterey on Sept. 26, 1822, representing the Mexican Emperor, Iturbide, and proclaimed California a province of independent Mexico. He proceeded to establish a new local government.

Walter Colton, builder of Colton Hall and publisher of The Californian, California's first newspaper, impaneled at Monterey the first jury ever called to try legal action in California. In his "Three Years in California," Colton writes: "The plaintiff and defendant are among the principal citizens of the country. The case was one involving property on the one side and the integrity of character on the other. One-third of the jury were Mexicans, one-third Californians, and the other third Americans. This mixture may have better answered the ends of justice, but I was apprehensive at one time it would embarrass the proceedings; for the plaintiff spoke in English, the defendant in French, the jury, save the Americans, Spanish, and the witnesses all the languages known in California. But through the silent attention which prevailed, the tact of W.E.P. Hartnell, who acted as interpreter, and the absence of young lawyers, we got along very well."

Dr. and Mrs. L.A. Williams of Carmel are the donors of a number of articles including furniture, linens and other household articles which will soon be on display in the various upstairs rooms in the Stevenson House. Each article is of the proper period and style to be shown in this historic building and the board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Association thank Dr. and Mrs. Williams for their gift and their willingness to share their family treasures with others.