

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### Monuments and Markers

Because of the revival of interest in the eventual establishment of the historical sites on the Monterey Presidio reservation as a national monument, it might be well today to review for our readers some of the historical data concerning these sites and monuments.

The Monterey Presidio was founded on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1770, when Gaspar de Portola, governor of the Californias, assisted by Father Junipero Serra and soldiers, took formal possession of the land in the name of Charles III, King of Spain. The formalities consisted of the planting of the royal standard, the uprooting of plants, and the casting of stones the latter symbolizing the seizing of the territory.

The Presidio destined to be the capitol of California, was founded on the beach near the oak under which Sebastian Vizcaino had claimed the land in 1602, and named Monterey in honor of the Count of Monterey (Gaspar de Zuniga y Acevedo), Ninth Viceroy of Mexico (1585-1603). **[CORRECTION: Count of Monterrey; dates 1595-1603]** Vizcaino commanded three ships, the San Diego, the Santo Tomas, and the Tres Reyes. They traveled up the coast from San Diego and arrived in Monterey Bay on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1602.

Fort Sola, also known as El Castillo, was named for Lieutenant Colonel Pablo Vicente Sola, who was appointed governor to succeed Capt. Jose Arguello on December 31, 1814. Sola arrived at Monterey, August 30, 1815. He was a native of Spain. His administration was occupied in combatting insurgency, and from all accounts was thoroughly dissatisfied with his position. An historic marker at El Castillo reads: "Old earthwork unsuccessfully defended in November 1818 by small Spanish garrison against two piratical vessels fling the flag of Argentina. The attacking force then looted the Pueblo."

Fort Mervine on the hill in the reservation overlooking the bay of Monterey is also marked. It was built by American forces soon after Commodore John Drake Sloat took possession of Monterey and California on July 7, 1846. The fort was named for Capt. William Mervine, commander of the USS Cyane and USS Savannah, who, acting under orders of the commodore raised the American flag over the Custom House at

Monterey, thus formally taking possession of the state for the United States. The occupation was achieved without a shot being fired.

The part of the reservation of the Presidio to the right of the entrance off Pacific Street, also is the site for the Sloat monument, dedicated in 1910. After nearly 20 years of planning Major Edwin A. Sherman saw his dream come true. He spent 10 years persuading Congress to make its first appropriation for such a monument outside of the national capitol, and in securing and placing the stones from 35 counties, cities, organization and individuals. There are 66 granite blocks in all the whole topped with an American eagle.

There is also a monument to Father Junipero Serra on the site. On May 17, 1890, Mrs. Jane Stanford wrote to the Secretary of War, Honorable Redfield Proctor, asking permission to erect a monument to the memory of Father Serra, "founder of 12 different missions in California and a successful worker for the Master," she informed him. In the letter she described the statue as she had planned it and as it now stands overlooking the bay. On July 9, 1890, she received the coveted permission to proceed with her plan. The monument was dedicated on June 3, 1891 just 121 years after the founding of the Presidio and the saying by Serra of the first Mass at Monterey.

There is also another memorial to Father Serra to the left of the Presidio gate – a huge granite cross placed there is November of 1906 through the generosity of James Murray, whose home on the waterfront in New Monterey was long an admired landmark.

To the left of the cross is a bit of land owned by the State of California and administrated by the State Division of Beaches and Parks. It was purchased in 1905 by the California Historic Landmarks League and given to the State of California for preservation. In 1949 following the History and Art association Merienda on June 3, Monterey's birthday, a boulder and bronze tablet was unveiled at the landing place in memory of Don Gaspar de Portola, the founder of the Presidio of Monterey. The plaque was the gift of the California Centennial Committee.