

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 7, 1952

As Seen Through Early Eyes

It would be interesting reading to have in one collection the authentic descriptions of Monterey and Monterey Bay as seen and recorded by all the early explorers, including the discoverer, the scientists, the padres, early writers and many others who passed this way in the long ago. The collection would show how different nationalities and diversified interests pictured the Monterey Peninsula. The comparisons would show how the scene has changed with the intervening years and how it had been viewed through various circumstances and objectives.

I have just finished reading "Font's Complete Diary," a chronicle of the founding of San Francisco as translated from the original Spanish manuscript and edited by Dr. Herbert Bolton of the University of California. Father Pedro Font had joined Juan Bautista de Anza in his second march to the coast of California from Mexico. His recording of his first impression of Monterey and Carmel will bear repetition here.

Anza had been appointed by Viceroy Bucareli of Spain to raise a colony and lead it to California over the road he had previously opened. In Sinaloa and Sonora he raised a colony of 240 persons. For 1,600 miles he led them amid untold hardships. Only one colonist, a woman, died on the long, long trail.

The success of Anza's second expedition was due in no small measure to Fray Pedro Font, according to historians. He was known for his mathematical learning, and on Anza's nomination he was sent with the colony to serve as chaplain, make astronomical observations, and keep a diary. He fulfilled his commission with meticulous care and admirable skill. He faithfully described the itinerary, the natural features of the country, the Indians, and the Spanish establishments they passed through, but most important he took latitudes and his results are reasonably accurate.

More than 150 years later Dr. Bolton retraced exactly or approximately Anza's entire itinerary and was able, through the excellence of the diaries of Font, to identify practically every water hole and camp site.

One chapter in Dr. Bolton's translation is devoted to Monterey and Carmel, and it is the description of these two locations, that we are interested in today. When

Anza, Father Font and the colonists entered the present day Monterey County they first stopped at Mission San Antonio de los Robles, from where they followed the Monterey River (the Salinas) near King City. Font described the wide valley called Canada de San Bernabe, which name still appears on the map. They halted at a place called Los Ossitos (Poda de los Ositos was the name of a large land grant and that name is also still on the map).

On Saturday, March 9, 1776, after Mass had been said the company set out from Los Ossitos and in the afternoon halted on the banks of the river at a place called Los Correos from where messengers were sent ahead to Monterey. The camp was north of the present Somavia school on the old river road, and the name Correos is still preserved in Rancho Guadalupe y Llonetos de los Correos, along the river.

Father Font reports in his diary that they stopped at La Soledad and that he was told that this name had been given because in the first expedition of Portola they had asked an Indian his name and he had replied, "Soledad," or so it sounded to them. From there they followed the river to a place called Buenavista and then to El Toro Rabon, after which he recorded, one begins to see the "Sierra de Pinos, which forms the port of Monterey." Buenavista, where the group left the river, was in the vicinity of the present Buena Vista, near Spreckels. They descended the valley of El Toro creek, which preserves the name El Toro Rabon, or the bob-tailed bull, and reached Monterey by way of Canyon del Rey;, essentially along the highway from Salinas to Monterey, according to Dr. Bolton's footnote.

(More on Tuesday)