

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 9, 1952

### **Lower Limb of the Sun**

Fray Pedro Font wrote in his diary on March 11, 1776: "Although in the morning it was somewhat cloudy and remained foggy all day, I planned to make an observation at this presidio, and I succeeded, although with a good deal of difficulty and not with the exactitude which I intended, and I found it without correction to be 35 degrees 27 ½ and with correction 36 degrees 36 ½ and so I say 'at the royal presidio and port of Monterey, March 11, 1776, meridian altitude of the lower limb of the sun, 49 degrees 52'."

In the afternoon, Fray Font, Anza, the Father President, Junipero Serra, with a few soldiers and the surgeon of the Presidio, set out from Monterey to journey to Mission Carmelo. One hour later they arrived there, after which Font noted: "having traveled a long league to the southwest by south."

Here they were welcomed by seven fathers with singular joy and festive peals of the good bells there, especially the large one, which Font described in his diary as having been brought by sea, supposedly from Spain.

Font's description of the mission is interesting: "The mission San Carlos del Carmelo is situated on a little elevation near the sea, and close to the Carmel River, which empties into a little bay called by Vizcaino the Puerto del Carmelo, which is formed here by the Sierra de Santa Lucia, which ends here, and the Punta de Cipreses (still called Cypress Point). It is an excellent site with very fertile lands. The temperature is cold in a desirable way and very healthful, although somewhat foggy as is the case on all that coast.

"The mission has a rather spacious and well made church although it is somewhat adorned with paintings. Apart from it and three good sized rooms of adobe for the dwelling of the fathers. Separate from it are the kitchen, a forge, and two or three other rooms. Although it has the Sierras near by because it is between the end of the Sierra de Santa Lucia and the Sierra de Pinos, nevertheless it is a most beautiful site and pleasing to the view, because it is so near the sea and in a country so charming and flower covered that it is a marvel."

Sardines were plentiful in 1776, for Friar Font wrote after his visit to Carmelo Missions; "The Indians of this mission who already number about 400 Christians devote themselves to fishing, for at this place many good fish are caught. Besides the sardines, which are very plentiful and at times are caught without any trouble because many are stranded. In short, although the rest of the missions are very good, this one seemed to me the best of all."

It is difficult to imagine how Mission Carmelo garden looked in 1776, when its appearance today is so beautiful. Friar Font recorded in his diary his first impressions. He took a walk in the garden on his first morning there and he wrote: "It was a delight to see it so beautiful and full of vegetables, cared for by Father Palou with such diligence that he spent all the day working in it and had it very well laid out. It is square, and all around it has a border of alelies already in flower, and the beds full of cauliflower, lettuce, and other vegetables and herbs. And the finest thing about that country is that without irrigation all such vegetables are raised, than which there is no better in Mexico. Indeed, one artichoke would ordinarily last two or three days. They do not irrigate because up to the present they have had no way to make an acequia from the river, for lack of men to work on it, although one can easily be made. And so they only water the plants by hand, throwing on each plant a gourdful of water after transplanting, and this suffices."

In the afternoon, Font reported that he went with the commander and two fathers to see the fields of wheat, barley and legumes (beans, chickpeas, peas and lentils), and it was "really a benediction to God to see such fine fields, planted without irrigation for lack of peons."

"I saw also the mast which the sea brought and stranded on this beach a few years ago. It is very thick, some four varas long, round made of some hard wood which I did not recognize, and all nailed together with iron nails like staples; for it still had some after they had taken from it about half an arroba (pound) of iron, and pulled out as many nails as possible. This mast came from far away, for in all that land there is no iron, and it is not known what purpose might have been served by a mast of this make," Font recorded in his diary on March 12, 1776. The mast was seen by the party near the mouth of the Carmel River, according to his notation.

(More Tomorrow)