

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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With A Sixpence Nailed to A Post

Four hundred and ten years of history were symbolically unfurled on January 25th in the State Capitol building in Sacramento, as state officials placed on display the 10 flags that have flown over California since its discovery in 1542.

In that year 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. In November Cabrillo sighted the present Monterey bay which he named "Bahia de los Pinos" or "Bay of Pines."

The event in Sacramento was the first time since the Capitol was first occupied on Dec. 6, 1869, that the flags have been displayed there in one group.

The Spanish Empire flag was flown from Sept. 28, 1542 until 1785. Sir Francis Drake, pious English buccaneer, commanding the Golden Hind, landed at Drake's Bay on June 15, 1579. He took possession of the land for England by setting up a post and nailing a sixpence to it. He christened his new discovery "New Albion." The service he held there was the first recorded Christian religious service to be held in California.

The Spanish national flag flew over California from 1785 to 1822. The flag of Russia was raised at Fort Ross on Sept. 10, 1812, and was lowered Dec. 12, 1841. The fort had been established by Ivan A.K. Kuskof, Russian explorer, and named from the root of the word Russia. Necessary buildings were built which Russia hoped would be the beginning of her foothold over the northwest coast of America. Fort Ross is now a state monument.

Fort Ross was formally abandoned on Jan. 1, 1842. Lands and buildings were purchased by John Sutter in complicated negotiations whereby the Russians ceded their property to the Mexican government and the latter assumed and guaranteed Sutter's debt. This marked the end of Russian attempt to gain California.

The flag of Buenos Aires was flown at Monterey from Nov. 20 to Dec. 15 or 16, 1818, when Hypolyte Bouchard, commanding a French privateer carrying the revolutionary flag of Buenos Aires with two frigates, the Argentina or La Gentila, and the Santa Rose or Libertad, anchored at Monterey. He attacked the fort on the 21st

and landed and captured the town the next day. He departed after much looting, on the 26th.

The next flag to make its appearance in California was the flag of the Mexican Republic, raised April 11, 1822, and flown until July 7, 1846. Governor Pablo Vicente Sola, his officers, and soldiers stationed at the presidio of Monterey, replaced the Spanish flag with the Mexican standard and took an oath of allegiance to Emperor Iturbide. In these ceremonies throughout the state, California thus ceased forever to be a province of Spain, but became a part of the future Mexican republic.

On July 7, 1846, Capt. William Mervine, commander of the U.S.S. Cyane and the U.S.S. Savannah, acting under orders from Com. John D. Sloat, raised the American flag at the Custom House at Monterey, thus formally taking possession of California for the United States.

After the Mexican flag there was the Fremont flag, March 6, 1846, when Capt. John C. Fremont erected a fort and raised the American flag on Gavilan Peak, preparing to resist orders of General Jose Castro requiring him and his men to leave California.

On June 14, 1846, the Bear Flag, standard of "The California Republic" was raised over the Plaza at Sonoma following the capture of Col. M.G. Vallejo, Lt. Col. Victor Prudon and Capt. Salvador Vallejo. William B. Ide, leader of the republican movement, charged that the citizens had been oppressed and deceived by the Mexican government, and urged all peaceable and honest citizens to support the republic.

At last on July 7, 1846, the American flag was raised in Monterey with 28 stars on the blue field.