

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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March in Monterey

There were many historical events in California during the month of March in the early years of west coast civilization and many of them happened here in Monterey.

It was on March 20, 1772 that Captain Pedro Fages, with Father Juan Crespi and a company of soldiers, left the Presidio of Monterey to explore the shores of San Francisco Bay by land. They arrived back in Monterey on April 5. This expedition was composed of probably the first men, other than Indians, to view the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys.

It was on March 22, 1744 that Juan Bautista de Anza reached the mission at San Miguel on the first overland journey from Sonora in Mexico to California.

The first sea otter expedition to the shores of California arrived in March of 1803, with Capt. William Shaler in command of the American ship, Leila Bird.

It was in the month of March that a royal decree from the King of Spain partitioned California into Upper California and Lower California, and established the capital of the former at Monterey, with Jose Joaquin de Arrillaga as governor, on March 4, 1804.

California ratified the constitution through its "diputacion" on March 26, 1825, and California thus became a part of the new Republic of Mexico. The constitution of the new territory became known as "los Estados Unidos Mejicanos."

On March 10, 1840, the first supreme court of California or the "Tribunal de Justicia" was formed by the "junta departmental," acting under the authority of the law of May 23, 1837. Juan Malarin, J.A. Estudillo and A.N. Osio, with Juan Bandini and Mariano Bonilla as the judges.

The first discovery of placer gold in commercial quantities in California was made by Francisco Lopez, majordomo of Mission San Gabriel, eight miles west of Newhall in Southern California on March 9, 1842.

The month of March played a great part in the history of the life of General John C. Fremont in California. During that time he spent much time in and near Monterey. He erected a fort and raised the American flag on Gavilan Peak, preparing to resist orders of General Jose Castro, demanding that he and his men

leave California. It was on March 1, 1847, that Colonel Fremont was deposed as governor of California after serving for 40 days. Kearney succeeded him.

Yosemite Valley was discovered by Major James D. Savage on March 25, 1851. The name applies to the tribal name of the tribe of Indians living there and was given to the valley by Dr. L.H. Bunnell, surgeon of the battalion.

March is also the University of California's birthday month. It was established by an act of the California legislature on March 23, 1868. The university was financed from a congressional land grant, the sale of San Francisco Bay tidelands, specific appropriations by the legislature, and gifts from individuals.

This month Monterey celebrated the birthday of the city charter on March 9 and on March 30 it will be just 100 years since Monterey was first incorporated. Since that date the charter has been amended twice, in 1935 and 1943. It has had six predecessors through the turbulent years of Monterey's formation, and its ancestors have figured in countless disputes involving politics, geography, intrigue and many other items.

It was on March 16, 1889, that the incorporation act was repealed. Two months later, by a vote of the board of supervisors of the County of Monterey, Monterey was again declared a municipality of the sixth class with a legislative body known as a board of trustees. This form of government lasted until July 1, 1911, when a new charter, framed by a board of freeholders, adopted by a vote of the people on Dec. 10, 12, 1910, and approved by the State Legislature on March 2, 1911, went into effect.