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Top Ten Historic Spots

Robert O'Brien, San Francisco author and journalist, recently suggested a list of ten of the most historic places in California. Two of the places he selected were on the Monterey Peninsula – Colton Hall and Mission San Carlos Borromeo.

After Mr. O'Brien's list appeared, Dr. Aubrey Neasham, regional historian of the National Park Service, unofficially, added two more historic spots in Monterey which, in his opinion, should be included in any list of "most historic places." His group included The Royal Presidio Chapel and the Old Custom House. San Juan Bautista was also mentioned in Dr. Neasham's list.

Robert O'Brien wrote that his list, arranged with no regard to relative importance, was:

1.- Mission San Diego de Alcalá. This was the first of the 21 Franciscan missions founded in Alta California. It was established by Father Serra in 1769, not at its present site but on Presidio Hill in San Diego. Five years later, it was transferred to a knoll overlooking Mission Valley, a few miles north of the pueblo. The building that stands there now is a restoration, built in 1931.

2.- The Gold Discovery Site. A stone cairn on the bank of the American River's south fork in Coloma marks the location of Sutter's mill, where James Marshall found the first Mother Lode gold, in January 1848.

3.- Sutter's Fort. Now impressively restored and serving as a museum, the fort is one reason why so many tourists stop off at Sacramento, thinks Robert O'Brien. For years it dominated and protected Captain Sutter's vast Sacramento Valley realm, and symbolized the end of the trail for many thousands of emigrants who came to California from the north and over the Sierra, both before and during the Gold Rush.

4.- Sweeney Ridge. A few miles south of San Francisco, between Millbrae and the Pacific is a high hill. From its summit, as nearly as can be determined from the records, the scouts of Portola looked north - the first white men to gaze upon San Francisco Bay.

5.- Colton Hall. Delegates from all parts of the territory of Alta California assembled here in Monterey in 1849 and drafted the State's Constitution. It was the first step

toward the establishment of the state government and admission to the Union.

6.- Mission San Carlos Borromeo. In the sanctuary of this mission at Carmel is entombed Father Serra, the great and heroic Franciscan, founder and first president of the California missions.

7.- Sonoma Plaza. For a little more than three weeks, in the late spring and early summer of 1846 California was a republic. It was here that a band of Yankee trappers and settlers led by Ezekiel Merritt, William Ide and others pulled down the Mexican flag.

8.- The Officers' Club, Presidio of San Francisco. The adobe walls of this building were erected about 1776. It is the oldest building in San Francisco, and probably one of the three oldest buildings in the entire State, and links the city of today with the time when there was nothing there but the bay, the sandhills, the Mission and the few adobe buildings of the Presidio itself.

9.- Drake's Bay Here, in June 1579, Francis Drake, the English navigator stepped on California soil and named the region New Albion. For the next six weeks he and his crew remained on shore and reconditioned their ship, the Golden Hinde. During their stay Drake's chaplain conducted the first Christian service in the English language on the Pacific Coast – an event commemorated by the Prayer Book Cross in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.

10.- Cahuenga Pass. In an adobe ranch house near this pass, and not far from the Hollywood Bowl of today, Captain Fremont, representing the American forces, and General Pico, representing the Mexican army, met in January, 1847, and signed the Treaty of Cahuenga, which ended the war with Mexico. With the capitulation, California in effect became American soil. A year later with the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo concluded all hostilities and made it official.

Tomorrow we will list Dr. Neasham's suggestion for additional historic sites and explain his reasons for selecting them.