

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Known As Agricultural Center

It is always surprising, and yet we do not know why it should be, when we hear folks say that their interest in the history of Monterey and California has grown with the passing of time. We still believe that California's centennial celebrations of a few years ago awakened Californians to the greatness of the past history of the glorious state in which they live. This community – the Monterey Peninsula – and the state of California, are symbolic of the Far West. Here history was made only a bit over a hundred years ago by Americans from the United States, but this land was visited first on May 9, 1540, by Hernando de Alarcon.

Alarcon, with two ships, left Acapulco, Mexico, to cooperate with the land expedition of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado seeking the Seven Cities of Cibola. He descended the Gulf of California along the western shore and reached the mouth of the Colorado River August 17 or 18. On the 26th he went up the river with small boats, seeking news of Coronado. In the vicinity of Gila he disembarked on the western shore of the river. Therefore he was the first white man to set foot on the soil of the present state of California, though Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator, is credited with the discovery (Hanna).

Mrs. George Langford of Pacific Grove has loaned us an old book "California" published in San Francisco in 1900, which we have found most interesting. The illustrations, of which there are a great many, include the Custom House plastered with theatrical posters, Carmel Mission as a beautiful ruin, Hotel Del Monte and Cypress Point, Carmel Bay, Jane Stanford's memorial to Father Junipero Serra on Presidio Hill, the Royal Presidio Chapel of Monterey as it appeared in 1900, and a beautiful picture of Laguna del Rey, Monterey.

Fifty-three years ago the editor of "California" (whose name does not appear in the publication) wrote of Monterey County as follows: "While Monterey County has been extensively advertised throughout the world it is because the county ranks high as an agricultural section. The county was organized in April, 1850, and then it had an altogether different aspect from the Monterey County of today. Its 36,000 square miles, or 2,304,000 fertile acres, wielded a harvest in 1899 without precedent during its history. The wheat and

barley crops were so heavy that the available machinery was inadequate to harvest the immense yield. Warehouses and storerooms failed to accommodate storage for grain."

The article goes on to relate that the total valuation of property in Monterey County in 1900 was \$17,431,145, an increase of \$1,389,115 over 1898. It claimed that the apples grown in Pajaro Valley were the finest grown in the world and that they were marketed in all parts of the globe, England being the best foreign market.

Mining was also attracting the attention of the county's residents, as were the oil wells at Parkfield, situated in the southern part of the county where there were excellent indications of petroleum. Gold and silver mining, the editor wrote, was carried on extensively. He also claimed that there were large lime deposits on the coast and in the interior and that building stone was quarried in large quantities. Most of these statements and predictions have come true in the 53 years which have intervened since the article dealing with Monterey County was written.

Leaving agriculture and mining, our 1900 editor wrote that the coast line of Monterey County is rugged and affords excellent fishing. "The whale fishery at Monterey," he stated, "ships large quantities of bone and oil to San Francisco annually. Salmon and abalone canneries are run in the same city with large profit to the owners."

The opening editorial in "California" is quite flowery although, of course, quite true: "And California, the sun-kissed, flower-laden daughter of the West – California upon whom nature was not alone content to smile, but who, from out the earth's abundant storehouse, chose limitless treasure for the maiden's dower, and bade her hide the gift beneath her throbbing bosom – what of California? In the galaxy of the great states, which will, like sparkling planets, glitter in the nation's crown, in the years that are to come, will not this precious gem find a worthy and becoming place? In the dawn of the twentieth century, she stands poised upon the shores of the Pacific, with extended arms and eager eyes bent upon the Orient, and like some fair bird, with fluttering, out-stretched wings, impatiently awaits the signal for her flight. Power and wealth attend her, and all around about the hem of her triumphal robe sway back and forth the odorous blooms of Plenty and of Peace."