

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Link With the Past

As we searched the old files of the Monterey Cypress, the Monterey American and the Monterey Peninsula Herald a few days ago for interesting items to include in the "Olden Times" column we came across a list of historical events which had happened in California and in Monterey during the month of September for several hundred years back. We could not make a direct copy of all these dates and events at the time, but we have had time since to go through several books and historical data and now have an interesting grouping of historical data for this month.

It was because September 16th is Mexican Independence Day, that we first became interested in this project. It was on September 16, 1810, that Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla gave the cry of freedom which started the War of Independence in Mexico.

In the history of California, the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo stands as a link with the past, a broken link, in a sense, and yet one that binds our people to their ancient Spanish heritage, according to Dr. George P. Hammond, the director of the Bancroft Library of the University of California. The Friends of the Bancroft Library brought out in 1949, a Grabhorn edition of 500 copies of the "Treaty" which was called a popular, reliable, edition of this "birth certificate" of California. We have a copy from Dr. Hammond before us as we write.

The signing of the treaty February 2, 1849, came less than a week after gold had been discovered at Sutter's Mill on the American River in California.

Our September dates begin with Cabrillo, whose Christian names were Juan and Rodriguez, a Portuguese navigator in the service of Spain and discoverer of California, who entered San Diego Bay, September 28th, 1542.

On September 29th, 1775, Capt. Juan Bautista de Anza left San Miguel de Horcasitas, Sonora, Mexico, on his second land expedition to California. Phil Townsend Hanna writes in his "California Through Four Centuries": "With de Anza were Fathers Pedro Font and Francisco Garces. The caravan reached San Gabriel January 4, 1776, and San Francisco on March 28. Only one of the party died on the lengthy and arduous journey. In

compensation eight children were born enroute. Anza's two expeditions to California show him to have been a courageous explorer and an excellent leader. He was born in Fronteras, Sonora, 1735. He became a commander of the presidio of Tubac in 1759. After his California journeys, Anza was appointed governor of New Mexico in 1778, serving one year, when he retired to the State of Sonora where he died in December, 1788."

The first friendly foreign visitor of distinction to California was Jean Francois Galoup de la Perouse, who arrived in Monterey on September 14, 1786, commanding the French frigates "Boussole and Astrolabe." La Perouse stayed in California but ten days and saw only that part of it in the immediate vicinity of Monterey. Through gifts to the missionaries and the military personnel, he introduced the potato to California, it is said.

La Perouse published a book in Paris in 1797 and an English translation in 1799, called "Voyages de la Perouse autour du monde", including interesting and informative accounts of his observations.

Five years after La Perouse's arrival in Monterey, a Spanish expedition under command of Alejandro Malaspina, engaged in an exploring voyage around the world, arrived in Monterey on September 13, 1791. With him was John Groeham (Graham), first American in California. All records seem to agree that he died and was buried on the day of his arrival here.

Another interesting tale concerning Mexico and California, Monterey and September, is one told in "California Through Four Centuries": a party of Mexican colonists, headed by Jose Maria Padres and Jose Maria Hajar, totalling some two hundred and including nineteen farmers, eleven painters, twelve seamstresses, eight carpenters, eight painters, eight tailors, five shoemakers, five tanners, five silversmiths, two hatters, two physicians, two barbers, two saddlers, two blacksmiths, one mathematician, one gardener, one surgeon, one machinist, one ribbon-maker, one mid-wife, one distiller, one candy-maker, one vermicelli-maker, one navigator, one founder, one porkman, one musician, one vintner, one apothecary, one bootman, one carriage maker, and six teachers, arrived at San Diego September 1, 1834, by sea from San Blas. The company was known as "Compania Cosmopolitana."

The foregoing quotation has special interest for Monterey for the reason that the company, according to legend, traveled on the "Natalia" the vessel wrecked at Monterey December 21, 1834, on which Napoleon escaped from Elba in 1815.

It was on September 1, 1840 that John Augustus Sutter was authorized by Gov. Juan B. Alvarado to erect what was later to be known as "Sutter's Fort" on the present site of the City of Sacramento.