

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 1, 1954

### **Past Octobers**

October was truly a great month in the past history of the Monterey Peninsula and California in general. So very many important and great events happened in those years gone by that it is interesting to jot them down in order that we may refresh our memories as to the accomplishments of our ancestors and of the famous navigators, who risked their very lives in order to visit and explore this foreign land.

On Oct. 3, 1769, Portola, seeking the port of Monterey, reached the Point of Pines, thus standing on the very rim of Monterey Bay without recognizing it. Five days later he camped on the present Pajaro River, which his soldiers named because they saw a large bird there which the Indians had stuffed. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month he crossed an arroyo at the site of the city of the Santa Cruz, which he named in honor of the Holy Cross.

But even before these early dates Cabrillo had discovered the present Santa Catalina and San Clemente Islands on Oct. 7, 1542, as he sailed up the coast of California. He was a Portuguese navigator, in the service of Spain and the true discoverer of California. A few days previous, Sept. 28, he had entered San Diego Bay and had named it San Miguel.

On Oct. 10 Cabrillo discovered Pueblo de las Canoas, an extensive village inhabited by Indians on the mainland which has been located at various points between San Buenaventura to Mugu Lagoon. It was here that he took formal possession of California for the King of Spain.

Cabrillo died from an infected arm and was buried on San Miguel Island, though his grave has never been found.

It was on Oct. 20, 1772 that Father Junipero Serra sailed from San Diego for Mexico to plead the cause of the California missions before a new viceroy and to protect them against the plea of the Dominicans that they be given equal jurisdiction over the missions. He gained the authorization of the first expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza to explore a land route between Sonora and California.

The first land grant in California – Rancho San Rafael – was made by Gov. Pedro Fages to Jose Maria Verdugo on Oct. 20, 1784. The grant covered the present cities of Glendale and Burbank in Southern California.

In 1791 – Oct. 9 – Mission de Nuestra Senora de la Soledad, or the “Mission of Our Lady of Solitude,” 13<sup>th</sup> Franciscan mission in California, was founded by Father Fermin Francisco Lasuen, Buenaventura Sitjar and Diego Garcia. This mission is now in the process of being restored with money collected by the Native Daughters of the Golden West.

We will now skip a few years and come to Oct. 18, 1837, and record the visit to Monterey of Capt. Abel de Petit-Thouars, commanding the French Frigate “Venus” on Oct. 18, 1837. He was engaged in investigating the whale fisheries of the North Pacific. He and members of his crew were welcomed and entertained by Alvarado, the governor and his aides. The French visitor recorded mainly his scientific observations which he published in his “Voyage Autour du Monde sur la Fregate La Venus,” issued in Paris in 1840. Phil Townsend Hanna says that his comments about the Spanish-Californians were restrained but favorable.

A later visitor – in fact, a day later visitor, Capt. Sir Edward Belcher, commanding the H.M.S. Sulphur and H.M.S. Starling, and English explorer, thought the Spanish-Californians were bandits and the region most repellent, according to his report in “Narrative of a Voyage Around the World” published in London in 1843.

In was on Oct. 19, 1842, that Com. Thomas Ap Catesby Jones, commander of the United States Pacific Squadron, took possession of Monterey and hoisted the American flag over the “castillo,” the Custom House. He was under the erroneous impression that the United States and Mexico were at war, so two days later, when he discovered his mistake, he took down the American flag, fired a salute to the Mexican flag and sent a message of apology to the Mexican governor.

The future destiny of California was now beginning to take definite shape. Secretary of State James Buchanan secretly instructed United States Consul Thomas Oliver Larkin to encourage the Spanish-Californians to resist French and English overtures and hoped that California would decide to declare her independence and then the United States could render her its “kind offices.”

The first of the old missions were leased or sold by Gov. Pio Pico on Oct. 28, 1845.