

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Monterey's Birthday

One hundred and eighty-six years ago Monterey became a settlement. On June 2nd with a Merienda in Memory Garden, sponsored by the Monterey History and Art Assn., this old town, that began in 1770 with a celebration and a feast, will commemorate its birthday. The gay affair is usually held on June 3rd, Monterey's actual birthday, but because that date falls on Sunday, Saturday has been chosen as the honored day.

On the 29th day of May Padre Junipero Serra stood in the prow of a small boat as it was rowed to the shore from the tiny ship San Antonio, to greet the gallant adventurer Gaspar de Portola, who had marched overland from San Diego to keep this trust. They embraced near the spot where famed Viscaino and his officers landed 168 years previously when that gallant seaman named this bay Monte Rey after his patron Don Gaspar de Zuniga Conde de Monterrey. Five days later, the tanned and hardened dragoon and the gentle and determined priest joined hands on the spot.

Father Serra celebrated the first Mass since Viscaino thanked God for his blessings; and Portola with his officers and then "performed the ceremony of taking formal possession of the land in the name of the King our lord (whom may God keep)."

To continue the words of the founder of the California Mission chain. "We afterwards ate our dinner together under a shade on the beach. The whole service had been accomplished by much thunder and powder, both on land and from the ship. To God alone be given all the honor and glory . . ."

So auspiciously, at the hands of great, devout, and fearless men, with ceremony, food, drink, and the firing of weapons, Monterey began its life as settlement.

Padre Serra went about his work, the beginning of the organization of a new civilization, in June of the following year the Mission was founded near the Carmel River and Monterey's church became the Royal Presidio Chapel. Carmel became the headquarters of the Church in California.

Universal as Father Serra was, he was a Monterey man, and he named his new church Mission San Carlos de Borromeo de Monterey del Carmelo.

The first Indian baptism in California took place at the Mission by the Carmel River.

In 1776 there were two capitals in the territory that now comprises the United States, these capital cities as far apart in their traditions as the continent that separated them; Philadelphia where a famous bell tolled forth the news that a Declaration of Independence had been declared and Monterey, named the capital city of a proud Spanish province it was a wide world in 1776. and Monterey was the greatest name on the western coast of North America.

This old town knew Portola, Serra, Crespi, Ortega and many others of like fame. It cheered and fumed in feasting and dancing when Juan Bautista de Anza rode proudly into town after his magnificent march overland from Sonora, Mexico, with his hardy pioneers and soldiers.

It has been written that the townspeople were frightened out of their wits by Bouchard with his Sandwich Islanders and mixed of freebooters. It welcomed Thomas Larkin, who added a Yankee note to the "Monterey type" architecture while he dreamed and schemed for the annexation of California to the United States. Finally, John Drake Sloat sailed into the harbor with his little fleet, a few days later July 7, 1846 - to raise the Stars and Stripes over the Custom House, officially claiming California for the union. Then it was that "the American settlers in Monterey heard Yankee Doodle played on Calle Principal."

The New California was born in Monterey!

Two of these important historical events are to be observed here within the next two months, both under the auspices of the Monterey History and Art Association. June 3rd will mark the 186th birthday of the founding of Monterey by Father Junipero Serra and Don Gaspar de Portola. On July 7th the Association and the Navy League will join forces with the U. S. Navy, the Marines, and the Coast Guard to present for the pleasure of the public the reenactment of the first raising of the United States Flag over the Custom House 110 years ago in Monterey.