

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Documents at Stake

Monterey is Spanish for "hill or wood of the King", so named in honor of Gaspar de Zuniga, Count of Monterey, and Viceroy of Mexico. The county of Monterey was one of the original 27 counties of California. Monterey was the original county seat, as it was the first capital of the state, but in 1873 the honor was given to Salinas. The county archives have contained many pre-state records in Spanish and we hope that these have not been destroyed now that microfilming has been adopted by county clerks or county governments throughout the state.

This brings to mind a resolution that was adopted at last month's meeting of the Conference of California Historical Societies held in San Jose asking that a thorough study be made by qualified historians before these irreplaceable documents are harmed or destroyed by county or city employees. It was recommended that they be presented to libraries, historical societies or museums for their use and the use of researchers of future generations. We fully realize that documents are space takers and accumulate from year to year, and that microfilm is much more easily stored, but the conference is most desirous of assisting in their preservation or destruction after each and every one has been examined and evaluated.

On Sunday as we took the ride over the water to the Bremerton to have dinner aboard. We admired the view, first from shore then from the deck of the ship, and thought of the many navigators who had described that same view in years gone by. First there was Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, in command of the "San Salvadore" and the frigate "Victoria", who discovered California in 1542 and sailed up to coast as far as the Northwest Cape. On his return voyage his chronicle records that on November 18, "We ran along the coast, and at night found ourselves off Cape San Martin (Point Pinos)." Evidently he missed the bay itself.

The Pacific Grove Lighthouse was established on Pt. Pinos in 1872, and a marker has been placed there by the Pacific Grove chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution., in honor of Cabrillo, the first European to see the coast of California at Pacific Grove. The Peninsula chapter of the D.A.R. was however, named for Commodore John Drake Sloat, who raised he

first United States Flag over the Custom House on July 7, 1846.

In the flagship "San Diego" Vizcaino entered Monterey Bay on December 15, 1602, the second European to enter its waters and the first to make a landing here. Even more important than his landing was his description of the bay as he saw it, for he was so enchanted with the beauty that "he wrote almost too enthusiastically to his Majesty concerning it." He spoke of it as a harbor "sheltered from the winds," and a legend grew up concerning the port of Monterey, which became "one of the moving factors for a century and a half in Spanish expansion to the northwest." It explains, too, the difficulty which later Spanish explorers had in finding it again.

Richard Henry Dana describes Monterey Bay in this charming manner in his "Two Years Before the Mast". When Dana sailed into the harbor on the brig "Pilgrim", "...the town lay directly before" him, "making a very pretty appearance; its houses being of white-washed adobe...The red tiles, too, on the roofs, contrasted well with the white sides and with the extreme greenness of the lawn upon which houses—about a hundred in number—were dotted about, here and there irregularly...This, as they are of one story, and of the cottage form, gives them a pretty effect when seen from a little distance...

"In the center of it an open square, surrounded by our lines of one-story buildings, with half a dozen cannon in the center...This is the Presidio or fort."

The old presidio was first named Fort Stockton, but later the same year the name was changed to Fort Mervine in honor of the officer in charge. The old fort is no longer there but a Monterey History and Art Association marker tells the visitor of its past history.