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### **Vancouver's Voyage**

A little watercolor sketch of Monterey, painted by John Sykes, is the oldest known view of California in this country, although there are earlier scenes of California, some of which exist today in the Naval Museum in Madrid. This small painting which we refer to today, was made by Sykes during the years he accompanied Capt. George Vancouver as an artist on the Pacific Expedition between 1790 and 1795.

This "View of Monterey" is the oldest documentary painting in the Honeyman collection which was exhibited in the Oakland Art Museum last year. At that time the Museum issued a catalogue in an edition of 1500 copies in December 1956, which we have found most interesting.

Robert B. Honeyman Jr. lives on his ranch near Mission San Juan Capistrano where this, his collection of priceless California art, is assembled. It is not only most remarkable that so many of the earliest drawings of California still survive, it is especially satisfying to see them garnered from all parts of the world and assembled into one collection. The occasion for the exhibit was the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Oakland Art Museum.

This small painting is an example of the art of the age of exploration which comprises the first chapter in the history of art in California. As a necessary part of its regular crew, voyages of exploration in the 18th Century had men aboard with at least some training in draftsmanship and often a professional artist whose task it was to depict the topography of the country, its natural resources, inhabitants and settlements. These documentary drawings and paintings, done in pen and ink, ink wash, pencil and watercolor or a combination of media, were part of the report each expedition was expected to make. When, as was frequently the case except with the Spanish voyages, these reports were afterwards published, engravings from these sketches were used to illustrate the books.

The commentary in the anniversary booklet concerning the exhibit states: "Artistic quality varies a great deal in paintings and sketches of this kind. Many of them are primarily topographic—as is the case with the Sykes' Monterey view. Others would be of interest as art even

had they no historical value." Most of the Sykes sketches made during the Vancouver expedition are in the possession of the Admiralty in London.

John Sykes was born in 1773 and was a "young gentleman" of only 17 years when he embarked with Vancouver. He did a number of views of California on the three visits of the expedition, which were engraved by William Alexander for publication with Vancouver's report. He rose rapidly in the ranks of the Navy and became a full admiral shortly before his death in 1858.

The Sykes view of Monterey was done on Vancouver's first voyage to Monterey in 1792 or his third in 1794. It appears to depict the Monterey Presidio as seen from one of the expedition ships in the harbor.

Vancouver describes the arrival in Monterey in 1792: "Wishing to delineate the coast, I which we found to extend nearly S. 14.E, from the entrance to San Francisco, we plied during the night; and the next morning shewed our situation to be off the entrance to the Bay of Monterey, where we were becalmed until noon, when a pleasant breeze allowed us to steer for the centre or bottom of the bay, whose shores were chiefly composed of low compact land: but in this point of view, the more southern and western parts of them seemed to be very much elevated, and bore the appearance of being insular. As we steered along, I was in constant expectation of finding a proper place for anchorage, which was not discovered until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, by making the signal I had settled with Senr. Quadra, which was immediately answered from the Presidio."