

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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**'Extracto de Noticias'**

The Book Club of California has announced that the club's spring book will be a reprint, in facsimile, of the "Extracto de Noticias," printed in Mexico in 1770, which contained the first news received there of the occupation of Monterey Bay, the capital and center of Spain's stronghold on the Pacific Coast.

The "Extracto" is, accompanied by an English translation, of a short narrative of how and why Spain took possession of California at a time when her colonial empire was about to go to pieces, and by two extraordinary maps. Altogether, the publications committee believes this will be a choice item for connoisseurs of Californiana - and the "dish will be made attractive by being priced under \$15."

The announcement goes on to tell that California was occupied by Gaspar de Portola expeditions in 1769 and 1770. The prime object was to establish a Spanish post on Monterey Bay, which had been explored and publicized by Sebastian Vizcaino in 1602 and 1603. According to the reports of his expedition, it was the most promising site where Spanish ships could seek refuge from pirates or obtain fresh water and supplies after their long journey from the Philippine Islands.

Since no explorer had gone back to re-examine the bay in the following century and a half, publicists and enthusiasts built up its fame by retelling their own stories, without ever being contradicted. As a result, Spanish mariners came to look upon it as an answer to a ship-wrecked sailor's prayer, a safe haven from where they could continue their search for the Strait of Amian and other wonders of the North Pacific.

In this new publication of the book club, we will read that even though Monterey Bay seemed so promising, no move was made to occupy it until Jose de Galvez became visitor general to New Spain in 1765. This dynamic man entrusted by King Charles III and his ministers with a complete reform of Mexico's administrative system, not only carried out these duties with daring and brilliance, but also determined to settle Upper California.

A decision to undertake such a vast arid expensive project was made easier by the fact that in 1768; when he was on the point of doing so anyway, he received

from the foreign office in Spain new reports of Russian activities in the North Pacific. It was reported in fact, that many Russians had been killed in skirmishes with the Indians.

From this, it was inferred that the Russians had actually settled there. If so, they might then be very near to the famous port of Monterey, and might even be the first to take formal possession of it.

This threat fitted in with Galvez's own plans; he was ambitious to become another conqueror, like Cortez or other heroes of old. He seized the opportunity, ordered the governor of Baja California. Don Gaspar de Portola, to head the project himself, enlisted the aid and cooperation of the Franciscan missionaries whose president, Father Junipero Serra, drew upon the missions of Baja California without stint for cattle, horses and provisions, as well as for personnel.

Drawing freely also on the resources of the mainland, Galvez organized and sent out the double-barreled expeditions by sea and land, which founded San Diego, Monterey (their real objective) and discovered San Francisco Bay, an extraordinary puzzle to them.

Immediately after the founding of the mission and presidio of San Carlos on Monterey Bay, reports of their success were rushed to Mexico. One set of dispatches was carried by two men who made the trip to lower California by land. The other reports were taken by Portola and Costanso on the ship "San Antonio" to the port of San Blas.

Though the ship left three weeks later, it got in first. Couriers carried their dispatches to Mexico City, and the viceroy, elated over the successful outcome of Galvez's plans, declared a public celebration, including the printing of good news.

This was the "Extracto de Noticias . . .," an abstract or summary of the news just 'received from Upper California, which is how offered to members of the California Book Club in a new format. The book, his first for the club, is designed by Jim Robertson.