

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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May Anniversary Dates

This being May Day as we write we thought it might be entertaining to go through the month's dates which might be celebrated in Monterey or in most parts of California. Back of every Californian, be he native or adopted, is a noble lineage. In a little more than a century and a half California has risen from a land of barbarians to become one of the most progressive commonwealths in the world, so let's reflect for a moment on what happened in California through four centuries, with anniversaries in May.

It was on May 9 that Hernando de Alarcon, left Acapulco, Mexico with two ships to cooperate with the land expedition of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado seeking the Seven Cities of Cibola. Because he landed along the western shore and reached the mouth of the Colorado on August 17 or 18, 1540, he was the first white man to set foot on the soil of the present State of California, though Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo is credited with the discovery.

On May 14, 1769, the first contingent of the land division of the second expedition arrived in San Diego, accompanied by Father Juan Crespi, a Franciscan missionary from Mexico City. Three days later, May 17, 1769, the first permanent settlement in California was started when soldiers and sailors under command of the sacred expedition's officers, Vila, Rivera y Moncada, and Fages, established themselves in New Town, San Diego, to the north of Old San Diego, at the foot of the present Presidio Hill.

An important date in May for Old Monterey is May 24, 1770, for it was on that date that Portola, Crespi, and Fages recognized the port of Monterey, which they had seen but failed to recognize during the first expedition in 1769. It is this date and June 3rd, which will be honored when the Monterey History and Art Assn. entertains its membership at a Merienda in Memory Garden on June 4. On the latter date, June 3, Mission San Carlos de Monterey was founded by Father Serra, the second to be established in Alta California. On the same day Gaspar de Portola, governor of the Californias, assisted by Father Serra, founded the Presidio of Monterey and took formal possession of the land in the name of King Charles III, King of Spain. The formalities consisted of planting of "the royal standard,

the uprooting of plants and the casting of stones, the latter symbolizing the seizing of the territory.

Several years are skipped before another historic date occurs in May. On May 21st, 1822, California held its first general election at Monterey, when electors representing five presidential districts met and chose Gov. Pablo Vicenti Sola as "dipulado" to represent the province of independent Mexico and to establish a new local government.

Jedediah Strong Smith, about whom we are hearing and reading so much these days, with two companions began the ascent of the Sierra Nevadas on May 27, 1827, which took eight days, from a camp on the Merced River. These were the first white men to cross the Sierra. Smith went on to Salt Lake City to rendezvous with his partners in the fur trade.

Gen. Jose Figueroa was appointed governor of California by President Carlos Maria Bustamante on May 9, 1832. The new governor arrived in Monterey by boat from Acapulco after many vicissitudes, Jan. 14, 1833.

M. Eugene Dufлот de Mofras, French emissary dispatched to California to investigate the possibility of developing trade between France and Mexico and its colonies, arrived in Monterey on May 12, 1841, on the "Ninfa." Mofras visited every mission and settlement in California. He published a book in France in Paris in 1844, under the title "Exploration du Territoire de l'Oregon, des Californies, et de Mer Vermeille."

It was on May 1, 1843 that Thomas Oliver Larkin was appointed United States Consul "for the Port of Monterey, in California, and such other ports as shall be nearer thereto than to the resident of any other consul or vice-consul of the United States within the same allegiance." He was the only United States Consul ever to serve in California.