

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Centennial Voyage

On June 3, 1870, Monterey celebrated her first centennial, details of which we have just been reviewing in a story in the Weekly Alta. The subheads in the lengthy report of the program for that day were: Excursion of the Pioneer Society—the Trip on the “Senator”—Reception at Monterey—Speeches of the officers—Festivities—The Return.

The article begins with this history of the Old Town's settlement: “Monterey was discovered in 1603 by Biscayno, and was named after Gaspar Zuniga, then viceroy of New Spain, who ranked as El Conde de Monterrey.” Everything was so minutely described by the Fathers and the engineers who landed, that 167 years later the place was recognized where divine service was celebrated previous to that of Jamestown. Today the same spot is marked by the cross to which we shall hereafter refer, and which our eyes have seen.

“The description of the climate and surroundings of Monterey was made in such glowing terms that orders were given for galleons from Manila to Acapulco to visit the port. Yet in that long period not one had succeeded in doing so. Under Junipero Serra two expeditions were started for this object—one by land and one by sea. Both reached their designation within a few days of each other.

“The official records establish the fact of the founding of the town on the 3rd of June, 1770.” That is the day still celebrated in Monterey with the Merienda in Memory Garden each year under the sponsorship of the Monterey History and Art Assn.

Father Serra founded the missions in Monterey and Carmel and Portola founded the first Presidion here, near where the Royal Presidio Chapel now stands. He died in Carmel Mission in 1784 and was buried in the church. “In the archives of the Monterey church, there is a document signed by all the clergymen then present, describing the exact place of his interment.

“At half past six o'clock Thursdays evening there stood on the decks of the steamer “Senator” in San Francisco a band of Pioneer Citizens,” the reporter of the California Pioneers continues, “comprising representative men too, and amongst them were over a dozen veterans, who migrated hither long before the

discovery of gold on the slopes, men from Marysville, Sacramento and interior towns—Captain Steele, one of the guests settled here as early as 1825. One-third of the passengers were invited guests and one-fourth of the entire number were lady-Pioneers, or lady-friends of the member of the Pioneers.

“The banner of the Society and American flag were conveyed aboard, and the old Mexican flag hoisted to the peak. In all there were 300 souls aboard when the steamer left the Folsom street wharf. In the absence of President Chemery, Charles D. Carter was selected acting president. Philip A. Roche was the chairman of the arrangement committee. Roche had been alcalde and first mayor of Monterey (1849-1850).”

The preparations for the trip to assist Monterey to celebrate the first centennial, were listed:

“Arrangements with the proprietors of the steamer Senator having been effected, that commodious vessel was secured for the excursionists. Additional berths were put up in the forward cabin, the larder stocked with viands and vinous beverages, and the ship made as comfortable as the most carping critic could desire. The \$10 paid to the secretary entitled the holder to meals and sleeping accommodations for the round trip.”

Details of the trip down were listed by the Alta reporter: “Maj. Gen. Ord, although unable to accept the invitation of the committee to go to Monterey, not only responded to it by note, but paying the steamer the compliment of 13 guns from Alcatraz as she steamed by the fortress. Gen. Ore in his note of regret, mentions the fact of his being stationed at Monterey, amongst a people generous, cultivated and hospitable, and that his “sojourn there was a delightful one.” Fort Ord was later named for this officer.

A heavy sea was encountered before reaching the open sea outside the Golden Gate but apparently did not dampen the spirits of the travelers. Santa Cruz was reached just as the sun peered above the hills and a two hour visit there enabled the passengers to “do” the place satisfactorily.

“From Santa Cruz to Monterey is 23 miles,” our reporter wrote, “lying directly across the extensive bay, and nestled romantically at the base of the range of lofty pines and cypresses, and in a graceful curve of the arm of the ocean. As the steamer approached the wharf the sound of a heavy gun reverberated along the distant hills, the precursor of the joyous welcome to the

coming visitors. That report in advance is now borne out by those made by the subjects of their spontaneous and hasty reception.”