

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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History at the Beach

How would our old-timers, newcomers, visitors, historians, and just simple folk, like to learn at a glance the history of Monterey Bay? It might be embodied in bronze lettering upon a natural rock monument bordering the beach between the two wharves, possibly near the benches recently placed there in honor of the mission chain in California.

That very excellent idea has been suggested by Talbert Josselyn, noted author and historian, whose family has lived in Carmel for many years. He has been one of the most enthusiastic members of the Peninsula group that wishes to preserve and perpetuate the historical background of this beautiful country, realizing there is just so much land and when it is gone there will be no more for super highways or real estate developments, oak trees, sites for the artists to record in paintings or winding, leisurely roads where one may pause to enjoy the landscape.

This is the dream that Talbert Josselyn has - and we second it. It is a review of the history of the early navigators who chanced to find Monterey Bay from the early days of 1600 through the years to the 1930s and early 1940s, when the fishing in the bay was at its height. The historical tablet would be a memorial to those who took part in the history of Monterey Bay through more than 350 years of our history.

Josselyn has written the story below as a suggestion of what he thinks as important for the marker's historical data:

"Monterey harbor is small, but it has made history.

"Look out upon these waters.

"On Dec. 18, 1602, Sebastian Vizcaino, in command of the ships San Diego, Santo Tomas and Tres Reyes, dropped anchor here. He came ashore to claim all this vast stretch of the New World for Spain and named this harbor in honor of the Viceroy of Mexico, the Count de Monterrey.

"In the ensuing century and a half, Monterey became the forgotten, the lost, legendary post.

'It was rediscovered by Gaspar de Portola in the land expedition of 1769.

"On June 3, 1770. Padre Junipero Serra arrived on board the bark San Antonio, bringing Christianity and civilization.

"During the next 75 years, here was the capital of Spanish and Mexican California. For a long period, here was the sole port of entry, with its Custom House, for all foreign ships, where they were given clearance papers to trade in other California ports. Among these ships was the brig Pilgrim, in 1836, with Richard Henry Dana one of the crew, and from this California voyage he was to write his classic 'Two-Years Before the Mast.'

"On July 7, 1846, the United States frigate Savannah lay in this roadstead. From her, Commodore John Drake Sloat was rowed ashore, to raise the Stars and Stripes over the Custom House, and claim for the United States of America an empire of 600,000 square miles: all of California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, a part of southwestern Wyoming, and the western half of Colorado and New Mexico.

"Look around you. Somewhere beneath these sands lie timbers of the brig Natalie, driven ashore in a gale on a long-ago winter night. As the brig Inconstant, she had carried the Emperor Napoleon from Elba to the French mainland, from whence he marched to Waterloo.

"In 1879, along this beach walked Robert Louis Stevenson, weaving it and the surrounding countryside into his immortal 'Treasure Island.'

"Look out again upon these waters. In the years of the late 1930s and early 1940s, here lay at anchor a fleet of 60 purse seiners. During the fishing season, throughout the nights of the dark of the moon, they went out to net their fish, bringing in sardines whose total annual tonnage made Monterey the third largest fishing port in the world."

It would be wonderful if the erection of this memorial would be a project of all the organizations and many of the individuals of the Peninsula - including the Monterey History and Art Assn., the Native Sons and Daughters, the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Monterey, the State of California, It is a history to be proud of - a history unequalled by any other place along the west coast and a close second to any contender on the eastern coast.