

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Famous California Firsts**

Here are a number of "famous firsts" in California. There are many others which from time to time we will collect and report.

The first forest fire in the Sierra Nevada of California occurred in 245 A. D. This date was determined by Ellsworth Huntington from his study of fire scars in a tree rings of the big trees (*Sequoia Washingtoniana*).

First white child born in California was the son of Salvador Ygnacio and Gertrudis Rivas Linares, of the overland expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza from Sonora to California. The birth took place in Middle Willows near the Arroyo Santa Catarina, which is in the vicinity of Warner's Hot Springs, Dec. 24, 1775.

The first potatoes in California were brought by the French navigator, Jean Francois Galaup de la Prouse from Chile in 1786. His was the first foreign ship to visit California after Spanish occupation. He visited Monterey Sept. 14, 1786, as a French scientist.

The first church bells were brought to San Diego aboard the San Carlos or the San Antonio in 1769. Until a few years ago they hung in the belfry of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Old Town, San Diego.

The first, expert cosmographer to map the California coast was Geronimo Martinez de Palacios, a member of Vizcaino's expedition of 1602.

The first sugar beets planted in the state were from seeds brought from Mexico and planted on Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's Petaluma ranch.

The first American doctor in California was John March, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1835. On Feb. 5, 1838, March was granted permission to practice by the ayuntamiento or city council.

The first Protestant church in California was organized by Presbyterians in Benicia in April 1849. The first express service was established by C. L. Cody in July 1847 between San Francisco and Fort Sutter.

The first presidential elector from California was Jose Covarrubias of Santa Barbara. When he went to deliver the electoral vote of 1852 for Franklin Pierce, he was welcomed at the wharf by the entire membership of Tammany Hall.

First public hospital was established on the outskirts of Monterey in 1844 as the results of an epidemic of smallpox in that year. It was set up in a rented house. There was no doctor, but two nurses and a burial squad was in attendance.

First United States mint in California was established in San Francisco by act of Congress, July 3rd, 1852. The building was completed early in 1854 and the branch mint began actual operation in April of that year. There had been considerable private coinage of gold in California from 1849 to 1855.

First American ship to touch California was the "Chatham", with Peter Puget master, in 1794.

The first roofing tile was made in California at Mission San Luis Obispo about 1790. Once adopted at San Luis Obispo, their use spread rapidly to the other missions.

First national forest in California was the San Gabriel Timberland Reserve proclaimed by President Benjamin Harrison on Dec. 20, 1892. This forest covered an area of 555,520 acres of timber and chaparral land in the Sierra Madre range of Southern California. The national forests of California now number more than 18 and cover a territory of over 20,000,000 acres.

The first American woman to come to live in California, it is told was Mrs. Rachel Holmes, who was a passenger on the same ship with Thomas Oliver Larkin in 1832. She married Larkin the following year after learning that her husband had died before her arrival in Monterey.

The first organ mentioned in California history was a barrel organ presented to the then father-president of the missions, Fermin de Lasuen, by Capt. George Vancouver while they were both at San Diego in December 1793. The contraption was taken to Mission San Carlos. It is now in the museum at San Juan Bautista and bears the maker's inscription; Dobbs, 22 Swan Street, London.