

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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California's Decisive 15

According to Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt, director of the California Historical Society and lifelong Californian, the first and last, decisive events noted in his "Fifteen Decisive Events of California History," just off the press of The Historical Society of Southern California, are Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's discovery of California, on Sept. 28, 1542, and, in 1945, the United Nations' birth in San Francisco.

The jacket cover describes the book as obviously not aimed, as an attempt to tell the whole and complete story of California history on the 91 pages the book contains. Rather, it is a specific selection of historical events made by Dr. Hunt, often known as the dean of contemporary California history. He designed it to whet the historical and literary appetite of the reader and lead him deeper into the state's historical past.

A selected bibliography for future reading and study of each event has been added by the author at the end of the recital of the events.

Gustave O. Arlt wrote the introduction. The title of the book, Dr. Hunt, admits, was suggested by the title of Sir Edward S. Creasy's well-known, valuable volume, published in 1851, "The Fifteen-Decisive Battles of the World from Marathon to Waterloo,"

The fifteen California events are divided into chapters thusly: Discovery by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, Sept. 28, 1542; Founding of San Diego Mission, by Junipero Serra, July 16, 1769; Overland Expeditions of Juan Bautista de Anza, 1774-1775; Overland Expedition of Jedediah Smith to California, 1846; Raising of the American Flag at Monterey, July 7, 1846; Discovery of Gold at Coloma, by James Wilson Marshall, January 24, 1848; Admission of California into the Union, September 9, 1850; Election of Leland Stanford as Governor, 1861; Completion of Pacific Railroad, May 10, 1869; Discovery of Oil as a Great Commercial Product, Election of Hiram W. Johnson as Governor, 1910; Completion of Panama Canal, 1914; Passage by Congress of the immigration Act of 1924, and Drafting of the United Nations Charter at San Francisco, 1945. "

A photograph of Colton Hall taken many years ago is the first illustration in "Fifteen-Decisive Events of California History." The remaining fourteen are likenesses of the

famous men of the state, including Cabrillo, de Anza, Padre Serra, Jedediah Smith, Commodore John Drake Sloat, Commodore Stockton, General Vallejo, John Charles Fremont, Thomas O. Larkin, William McKendree Gwin, Leland Stanford, Hiram W. Johnson, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

Chapters 6 and 8 in Dr. Hunt's newest publication are entirely a review of two of Monterey's historical events - the Raising of the U. S. Flag at the Custom House in 1846 and the Constitutional Convention in Colton Hall in 1849.

The number of events selected – fifteen is not intended as either a magical or a final sum total of decisive events. The author says the number fifteen is large enough to afford a reasonable variety, but at the same time it is sufficiently small to avoid the pitfall of particularism. Some of the events are seen to be chiefly political, some military, others economic, while still others emphasize moral and religious values.

The jacket photograph was taken in the Bull Creek Grove along the Redwood Highway and is the work of and from the collection of Frank A. Schilling. These fifteen Redwoods pictured are symbolic of the living history of California's fifteen decisive events, according to a note on the jacket.

The price of the book is \$5 as announced by the publishers, The Historical Society of Southern California.