

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 15, 1960

Juan Cabrillo

Now that we have a Cabrillo Highway in California and we honor Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a navigator in the service of Spain and discoverer of California, we should know more about this distinguished gentleman.

Cabrillo, commanding two vessels, the San Salvador and the Victoria, entered and discovered the present San Diego Bay on September 28, 1542, naming it "San Miguel." Cabrillo and some of his men went ashore and engaged in a Skirmish with Indians, three of the whites being wounded.

Cabrillo came on up the coast and discovered the present Santa Catalina and San Clemente islands on October 7, 1542. He also went ashore on one of the islands and named the former "San Salvador" and the latter "Victoria," after the two vessels under his command.

The famous explorer also discovered Santa Monica Bay and named it "Bahia de los Fumos" (Bay of Smokes) because of the many camp fires of the Indians which he saw there. Two days later, October 10, 1542, Cabrillo discovered Pueblo de las Canoas, an extensive village of Indians on the mainland of the Santa Barbara Channel. The village has been located at various points from San Buenaventura to Mugu Lagoon, according to the late Phil Townsend Hanna who wrote "Through Four Centuries," a handbook of memorial dates. Here Cabrillo found a colony of Indians and took formal possession of the land for the King of Spain.

Coming on up the Pacific Coast he discovered Anacapa and Santa Cruz islands but did not name them. On October 15, 1542, Cabrillo sighted the present Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, and San Miguel Islands. They were thought to be one island and he named them "San Lucas." In January, 1543, the error was discovered and thereupon the present Santa Cruz Island was named "San Salvador" (the same name formerly given to Santa Catalina); the present San Miguel, "La Posesion"; and the present Santa Rosa, "San Lucas." Not content with all these discoveries and selection of names, Cabrillo sailed on and discovered Point Concepcion, which he named "Cape Galera" on October 18, 1542. In November he sighted the Santa Lucia Mountains which

he called the "Sierras de San Martin," in honor of the fact that they were sighted on Saint Martin's Day.

A memorable day came on November 16, 1542, when Cabrillo sight the present Monterey Bay, which he called "Bahia de los Pinos," or "Bay of Pines." Two days later he named the Coast Range the "Sierra Nevadas." The name identifying the present Sierra, first appeared on the map of Father Pedro Font in 1777.

On January 3, 1543, Cabrillo died at La Posesion (Cuyler's Harbor) on the present San Miguel Island, from the results of a broken arm, which probably became infected, which he suffered during the shore journey on the island. Before he died he relinquished the command of the expedition to Bartolome Ferrello, who had acted as chief pilot and whom he charged to continue the exploration so auspiciously begun.

Cabrillo was buried on San Miguel but his grave has never been found. One of Ferrello's first acts was to name San Miguel "Isle de Juan Rodriguez," a name that proved of very short life.

Ferrello sailed on to the northernmost point of his explorations, reaching 42 ½ degrees in the vicinity of the present Rogue River in Oregon. From this point he returned to Mexico.

All of these dates we have acquired from Hanna's book "California Through Four Centuries, a Handbook of Memorable Historical Dates."