

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 7, 1960

The Indians Listened

To accompany these stories about San Antonio Mission Indians, the Indians who resided there and the history of the Jolon country in Southern Monterey County, we should include the meaning of all these Spanish Indian names which abound in that beautiful country to the south, still unspoiled by growth in population and necessary housing development.

At San Antonio (St. Anthony), 20 miles from King City, Father Serra established the mission San Antonio de Padua, July 14, 1771. In connection, Palou tells a story that brings out one of the characteristics of the venerable founder – his ardent enthusiasm: “They (the founding party) departed for the Santa Lucia Mountains, taking priests for the new mission, the required escort of soldiers and all necessaries. Twenty-five leagues south by southeast from Monterey, they arrived at the hollow of this ridge, where they found a great ‘canada,’ which they called Robles (oaks), from the great number of those trees. Finding a level plain in the same canada, bordering on a river which they called San Antonio, and which they thought to be a good site because a good flow of water, even in the dry month of July, could be conducted to the lands without difficulty, all agreed upon this site.”

“Serra ordered, the mules to be unloaded, and the bells to be hung upon the branch of a tree. As soon as they were hung, he began to ring them, crying out, ‘Hoi! Gentiles, come, come to the Holy Church, come to receive the faith of Jesus Christ!’ “ One of the other padres remonstrated with him, saying it was idle to ring bells in the absence of the gentiles, but Serra said, “Let me ring, let me relieve my heart, so that all the ‘wild people in this mountain range may hear.’“ It happened that some natives were attracted by the ringing of the bells, and came to witness the first Mass, which Serra regarded as a good augury.

St. Anthony of Padua, the patron saint of Mission San Antonio de Padua, was a Portuguese by birth, who entered the Franciscan Order. He went as a missionary to the Moors, but was compelled by illness to return to Europe, where he had great success in Italy and France as a preacher. Among many miracles accredited to him is the one thus related: “When preaching at the funeral of a very rich man, St. Anthony denounced his love of

money, and explained, ‘His heart is buried in his treasure chest; go seek it there and you will find it.’ The friends of the man broke open the chest, and to their surprise, found the heart; they then examined his body and found that his heart was indeed wanting.” – (Stories of the Saints and Mrs. Sanchez’s “Spanish Place Names.”)

Now that there is so much interest expressed in the possibility of Father Junipero Serra becoming a saint in the not too distant future, we were interested in this bit of historic information:

Santa Rita is the name of a small village in Monterey County, near Salinas. The patron saint of this place was born in Rocca Porena in 1386 and died in 1456. Her feast day is May 22, and she is represented as holding roses or roses and figs. When but twelve years of age Santa Rita was compelled by her parents to marry a cruel, ill-tempered man. This man was murdered, and after his death, his widow desired to enter the convent at Cascia, but was at first refused admission on account of her widowhood. She was finally received, however, and so many miracles were reported to have been preformed at her intercession that in Spain she was given the title of La Santa de los Imposibles (The Saint of the Impossibilities).