

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 29, 1960

Expedition Art

Members of the Monterey History and Art Assn. have been invited to attend a special preview of the "Art of the Malaspina Expedition of 1791-92" this evening, June 29th, at 8 o'clock in Casa Serrano. The exhibition has been lent by the Museo Royal in Madrid and was brought here by Lt. Julio Guillen of the Museo staff, who will travel with the exhibition on its first showing outside of Spain.

The Malaspina Expedition stopped at Monterey and most of the early documentary material relates to this area. Several drawings show the Spanish Presidio and Carmel Mission, both in the course of construction. The Royal Presidio Chapel is shown with a temporary thatched roof.

The Presidio of Monterey was established on June 3, 1770 and by 1791, when the Spanish expedition under the command of Alejandro Malaspina anchored in Monterey Bay, it consisted of a group of buildings forming a square. The barracks for the soldiers and the store houses were built of wood and had mud roofs, the chapel and governor's house were of adobe construction. A drawing of this will be in the exhibition on the evening, and through the Fourth of July in Casa Serrano on Pacific street.

Malaspina had sailed from Cadiz in 1789 for a tour of the world and after exploring the coasts of South America, Panama, and Mexico he sailed north as far as Cape Mendocino before visiting Monterey. The first American to land in California, a gunner named John Groem who accompanied the expedition, died and was buried at Mission San Carlos, which was situated a short distance from the Presidio.

The "View of the Presidio," credited by Henry Raup Wagner to Tomas de Suria, the artist on the Malaspina expedition, is believed the earliest picture of a military installation at the capital. The painting is unsigned. The view is sketched from the slope at the rear of the Presidio and looks toward the bay where two vessels are anchored, perhaps the "Atrevida" and the "Descubierta" of the Malaspina expedition.

Tomas de Suria, believed to be the painter of the "View," came to Mexico in 1778. He joined the Malaspina expedition at Acapulco, taking the place of

the artist, Brambila, who was forced by illness to remain in Mexico. Suria returned to Mexico and presumably sent the picture to Spain to be included in the report of the expedition. The report remained in manuscript until 1885, when it was published in Madrid with the title "Viaje politieo-cientifio abredida del mundo por las corbetas Descubierta y Atevida."

Among the items included in the collection are water colors of local birds, charts of the Pacific Coast and its harbors, a four foot model of the corvette Atevida, the flagship of the expedition, and the original handwritten contracts of the artists.

The exhibition will be on view June 30th through July 1 from 1 to 5 p.m. The public is invited to attend. The price of admission will be 50 cents.