

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 15, 1961

Marker For Monterey Harbor

"Look out upon these waters." Monterey harbor is small, but it has made history." So begins a history of our beautiful bay as written by Talbert Josselyn. Why not honor these blue waters at our front door with a suitable marker, overlooking the bay, in the center and in front of the row of Mission benches where local as well as our visitors may familiarize themselves with the important historical events which have taken place there? It would be a wonderful and generous gesture on the part of the city, various clubs and civic organizations if a marker could be placed there before Monterey's 191st birthday on June 3rd, 1961 and dedicated on that day. Why not strive for that?

Talbert Josselyn continues: "On December 16, 1602, Sebastian Vizcaino, in command of the ships San Diego, Santo Thomas and Tres Reyes, dropped anchor here. He came ashore to claim all this vast stretch of the New World for Spain and named this harbor in honor of the Viceroy of Mexico, the Count of Monterey.

"In the ensuing century and a half, Monterey became the forgotten, the lost, legendary port.

"It was rediscovered by Gaspar de Portola in his land expedition of 1769, but he was unable to recognize it at that time. In May of the following year, Portola returned and a week later Padre Junipero Serra arrived on board the bark San Antonio. On June 3, 1770, Monterey was again claimed for Christianity and Spain.

"During the next 75 years, here was the capital of Spanish and Mexican California. For a long period, here was the sole point of entry, with its Custom House, for all foreign ships, where they were given, clearance papers to trade in other California ports. Among these ships was the brig Pilgrim, in 1835, with Richard Henry Dana one of the crew and from this California voyage he was to write his classic 'Two Years Before the Mast.'

"On July 7, 1846, the United States frigate Savannah lay in this roadstead. From her, Commodore John Drake Sloat ordered Captain William Mervine, of the accompanying sloop Cyane to be rowed ashore to raise the Stars and Stripes over the Custom House and take possession for the United States of America an empire of 600,000 square miles: all of California, Arizona,

Nevada, Utah, a part of southwestern Wyoming, and the western half of Colorado and New Mexico,

"Look around you. Somewhere beneath these sands lie timbers of the brig Natalia, driven ashore in a gale on a long-ago winter night. The tale is told that as the bark Inconstant, she carried the Emperor Napoleon from Elba to the French mainland, from whence he marched to Waterloo.

"In 1879, along this beach walked Robert Louis Stevenson, weaving it and surrounding countryside into his Immortal 'Treasure Island.'

"Look out again upon these waters. In the years of the late 1930's and early 1940's, here lay at anchor a fleet of ninety purse seiners. During the fishing season, throughout, the nights of the dark of the moon, they went out to net their fish, bringing in sardines whose total annual tonnage made Monterey the third largest fishing port in all the world."

Think for a moment, dear reader, the value of this monument on our beach. Visualize a lectern type marker, slanted at top, all constructed of native rocks, with a bronze plaque spread on the top telling the above story and looking but as you read upon bay and appreciating the history that has unfolded there since the first navigator sailed into this port many years ago.