

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Historical Monument No. 1**

Contrary to a published article stating that the Old Monterey Custom House had recently been made a Historical Monument and received a marker, we wish to recall the fact that the Custom House is State Historical Monument No. 1.

Since the establishment of the California State Park Commission in 1927 it has been supervised by that body as a State Historical Monument under lease from the federal government; and prior to that, for about 20 years, was administered by a special commission. When title to the land was taken over by the State prior to 1928, renewed plans were made for the protection of the building and the expansion of its museum of early California in which the Monterey History and Art Assn, played a very prominent part beginning in 1930.

Joseph R. Knowland, chairman of the California State Park Commission at that time, had for many years been chairman of the Historical Landmarks Committee of the Native Sons of the Golden West and had been active in the movement to acquire the Monterey Custom House.

Purchase price paid by the State to the federal government was \$20,000, one-half of which was contributed by public-spirited citizens of this region and the remaining half by the State park bond funds. The tract containing approximately 1 1/2 acres was declared surplus property by the U. S. Treasury Department, having been long ago abandoned for custom purposes.

Under authorization of an act of Congress it was sold to the State at one-half of its appraised valuation. When the federal government announced its intention to sell this site there was some apprehension that it might fall into private hands but action by the State and the Monterey citizens assured its preservation for the public. It is the spot at which in 1846 Commodore John Drake Sloat landed, raised the American flag, and took possession of California for the United States on July 7th.

John Howell-Books has recently published an outstanding book on one phase of California history: "Journal of Jose Longinos Martinez."

California, it has frequently been observed, exercises a compelling attraction for odd characters, the .. introduction declares. Perhaps the earliest, and

certainly one of the most diverting, was Jose Longinos Martinez, naturalist of the botanical expedition of 1788. Longinos was a Spanish surgeon with a devouring curiosity about all aspects of nature, the cult of which was epidemic at the time. He had a strong conviction of his own omniscience, which brought him into violent collision with the director of the expedition, Dr. Martin Sesse. The bitter feud between the two scientists got so far out of hand that Viceroy Revillagigedo was obliged to separate them, sending Longinos off on his own to explore the coast of San Blas and the "Two Californias."

With virtually no equipment and with one dubious assistant, whom he eventually got rid of, the furious naturalist left Mexico City on his truly imposing journey late in January 1791 and ended it in Monterey, California, on Sept. 3, 1792. His description of native life, the natural products of San Blas and the Californias, and the petroleum springs (volcanos) of Rancho La Brea and the Santa Barbara channel are excellent.

The journal has been newly translated and edited with an introduction by Lesley Byrd Simpson for the Santa Barbara Historical Society; designed and printed by Lawton Kennedy; maps; bound in green cloth with ornament and title stamped in gold foil; acetate jacket; packed in mailing carton. Price \$12.50, plus sales tax where applicable.