

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Pirate Invasion Ends

Capt. Hypolite de Bouchard, who, on the evening of Nov. 22, 1818, uninvited and flying the flag of Argentina, entered Monterey Bay and attacked the small adobe village of Spanish Monterey, found the place deserted and for five days flew the flag of Argentina at the Presidio. He had sent word to Gov. Sola of his presence here and received no reply.

When Bouchard had not heard from Sola at the end of the fifth day and the "Santa Rosa" had been repaired, he decided to leave Monterey. The little settlement was given over to pillage and all buildings except the chapel and homes of some Americans were set afire. The plunder was meager; fresh beef, some wine and aguardiente, and few bars of silver found hidden in an attic.

As soon as the enemy had disappeared, the Montereyans began to return and rebuild their homes; a slow process because there was no lumber-mill in the province, and rawhide had to take the place of nails, as iron was scarce.

Bouchard headed southward for Santa Barbara. Instead of going directly there, he landed about 20 miles northwest of the Presidio of Santa Barbara to plunder El Rancho del Refugio. While some of the Argentinians were butchering cattle, others hurried on to the ranch buildings, about a mile from the beach. After ransacking the house and storerooms and finding little of value, they set fire to the buildings. Finding some Palomino horses, the pride of the ranch, they cut their throats.

As the last of the marauders returned to the beach, they were intercepted by Sgt. Ortega and 30 dragoons. Ortega and the dragoons had been sent to aid Sola by Don Jose de la Guerra, commandant of the Presidio of Santa Barbara, but arriving at Monterey after Bouchard left there they hurrying back to help Santa Barbara when they discovered the Argentinians, and captured three of them.

Bouchard had planned to attack Santa Barbara next. A heavy northwest storm, however, compelled him to anchor for three days in the lee of Santa Cruz Island. Then, as the sea was still running high, making it too dangerous to land his fusiliers on the beach, he decided to give up his project of overthrowing the Spanish

authority in Alta California. Yet, he did not want to leave California without the three captured men, one of which was Lt. Lowell of Boston. Anchoring off Santa Barbara, he sent a messenger to De la Guerra, to propose an exchange of prisoners.

This De la Guerra agreed to do, expecting Bouchard to have several prisoners. But when he learned that Molina, found drunk in the Monterey Presidio was the only one, he hesitated until Bouchard promised to leave Alta California at once.

Notwithstanding this promise, Bouchard made one more landing in Alta California, at Mission San Juan Capistrano. About all he got was more fresh beef. The padres had carried their valuables to Pala Mission, and had sent their wine supply to the mission under the protection of some Christian Indians. Not so much of it arrived, however; the Indians could not resist the temptation of lightening their loads as they went along.

Thus, ended Bouchard's invasion of California. He sailed southward and harried the coast of Mexico. After the Argentine navy was disbanded, Bouchard served in the Peruvian navy as a commander. From that time on, his future is uncertain. Some writers say he turned to commerce and was murdered in the interior of the country.

Ten flags have flown over California since its discovery in 1542. The flags and their chronology are:

The Spanish empire flag, Sept. 28, 1542 to 1785; the flag of England, planted by Sir Francis Drake at Drake's Bay, June 17 to July 23, 1579; the Spanish national ensign, 1785-1822; the flag of Russia, raised at Fort Ross Sept. 10, 1812, and lowered Dec. 12, 1841, when Russia sold out to Capt. John Sutter.

The Argentina flag flown at Monterey by pirate Hypolite Bouchard from Nov. 20 for five days, 1818; the Mexican flag, April 11, 1822 to July 7, 1848; the Fremont Bear Flag raised at Sonoma Jan. 14 - July 9, 1846; the Stars and Stripes, raised by Commodore John Drake Sloat at Monterey July 7, 1846, with 28 stars; and the present Flag of the United States.