

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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First Visitors

Hernando de Alarcon was the first white man to set foot on the present State of California when he reached the mouth of the Colorado River on Aug. 18, 1540. Alarcon, with two ships, left Acapulco, Mexico, to cooperate with the land expedition of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado seeking the Seven Cities of Cibola.

Don Juan Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator, set sail from Natividad on the west coast of Spain and arrived in Monterey, Nov. 17, 1542. He was in the service of Spain and was the discoverer of California, commanding two vessels, the "San Salvador" and the "Victoria". It was at a point in Southern California where he held a colloquy with the Indians and took possession of the land for the King of Spain. He discovered several islands along the coast but failed to name them.

It was on Nov. 16, 1542 that Cabrillo sighted the present Monterey Bay, which he called "Bahia de los Pinos," or "Bay of Pines".

Following Cabrillo came Sir Francis Drake, a pious English buccaneer commanding "The Golden Hind," landing at Drake's Bay north of San Francisco. Drake took possession of the land for England by setting up a post and nailing a six-pence to it. He christened his discovery "New Albion." While on shore he held the first recorded religious service to be held in California.

Sebastian Vizcaino, a Spanish merchant, wanted to fish for pearls, so he ventured up the California coast and arrived in Monterey Bay on Dec. 16, 1602, commanding three ships: the "San Diego," the "Santo Tomas" and the "Tres Reyes." He anchored first in San Diego Bay and gave it the name. On Dec. 17 he landed at Monterey and mass was said by the friars. The port was named "Monterey" by him in honor of Gaspar de Zuniga y Aceveda (Count de Monterey) and spent 18 days here. Had he lived to carry out his plans for colonization, Monterey would have antedated Jamestown, Va., by one year.

One hundred and sixty-eight years later, Monterey became the site of the principal presidio, as well as the capital of California, and the location of the chief mission in the chain of such establishments founded by the Franciscan missionaries.

Don Gaspar de Portola, governor of the Californias, accompanied by Father Junipero Serra and other Franciscan monks, left San Diego seeking the port of Monterey and on June 3, 1770, established Mission San Carlos de Monterey, the second mission in Alta California. The presidio was founded, and the place taken in the name of Charles III, King of Spain.

Jean Franco is Galoup de la Perouse, commanding the French frigates "Boussole" and "Astrolabe", the first friendly foreign visitor of distinction to California, arrived in Monterey on Sept. 14, 1786. Perouse stayed in California 10 days and saw only that part of it in the immediate vicinity of Monterey. Through gifts to the missionaries and the military officials, he is credited with the introduction of the potato to California.

Perouse wrote his "Voyages de la Perouse autour du monde" in Paris in 1797, an English translation appearing in London in 1799.

Other navigators to visit the port of Monterey were Alejandro Malaspina, Spanish, 1791; Capt. George Vancouver, English explorer, 1792.