

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Serra's Statue Unveiled

I was wondering as I glanced up at the statue of Padre Junipero Serra on Presidio Hill how many persons in Monterey had ever walked up there to admire it. Then I pondered over its history, why it was placed there and who thought of placing it there to honor this man who was the founder of the chain of missions in California. Someone who did climb the hill to see it did not appreciate the statue, its history and the great Franciscan padre it honored, for one hand was knocked off years ago and it has never been replaced.

Mrs. Leland Stanford, who founded Stanford University in memory of her son, gave the statue of the venerable Serra to Monterey and the dedication came on June 3, 1891, when it was unveiled on the 121st birthday anniversary of this city.

"The occasion was an interesting one," writes the reporter for the newspaper of that day, "but to none so much as the old, Indian families that had lived in the vicinity almost since the time of Junipero himself. These people crowded the roads leading into Monterey. They came on foot, the women so muffled in shawls that only their great black eyes showed. They came on horseback, sometimes two on a single animal. Usually they came barefooted - a boy and an olive-skinned girl clinging behind her brother. They did not have saddles and in many cases not even as much as a bridle to hold onto.

"But the most picturesque of all was a great 'dead-ox' wagon. Four horses or mules pulled it. A tent-like structure sheltered the family from the warm sun, and from every rip and hole in this tent-like affair projected a head.

"The day of the dedication the knoll was soon crowded with people. The women, for the most part, sat around on the grass and enjoyed the glorious day. The men walked around, stopping now and then to look at the veiled statue. About 11 o'clock the special train bringing the delegation from the Native Sons, the Young Men's Institute, and the Pioneers, arrived.

"They were met at the depot by a procession headed by the Monterey band. The fire companies of Watsonville and Monterey were there and made a pretty show with their new banners and red shirts. With the welcoming procession came the Reverend Angelo Casanova, V.F.,

pastor of the Royal Presidio Chapel, who was president of the day; Reverend Clementine Daymann, O.S.F., Orator, and Judge Webb of Salinas, the civic orator. The prettiest feature of the whole procession was the Watsonville Zouaves, composed of forty pretty girls in short red skirts and canvas leggings. Their maneuvers were so gravely executed as if they had been a veteran guard."

It is interesting and amusing to read on. "The procession formed at once on the arrival of the train and marched along the principal streets to the town. It was something after noon when the head of the parade reached the monument. The cowled friars and the pioneers mounted the platform. The Reverend President extended his arms silently and after a moment of absolute silence, he spoke: 'We are here to do honor to Father Junipero Serra. Mrs. Jane Stanford has presented us this monument and now it shall be seen.'

"Four baby hands pulled the flag aside. (The baby hands were those of the late Marie Antonia Field and her brother, the late Estabon Field, great grandchildren of Esteban Munras, Spanish grandee of early Monterey.)

"The banners dropped about the base of the statue and the figure of the hero priest glistened in the sun. The statue presents the padre in the habit of a Franciscan monk. The bow of the boat is shown, and a great cross is in relief on the rough pedestal. The entire statue is of granite, the work of Perter Bisson Jr. of San Jose."