

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 1, 1964

Walk Through History

There are many short walks of interest on the Monterey Peninsula, but how many folks even think of taking them these days of motor cars, traffic jams, the hurry and bustle of everyday life and just poor neglect of the joy and calmness in the open country?

So today let's think of a walking tour to Fort Mervine, and the Sloat and Serra monuments on Presidio hill.

Before entering the huge wooden gate at the Presidio there are two granite markers. One is the tall cross enclosed in an iron fence, which marks the landing place of Father Serra and where the first mass was said by the founder of the California mission chain.

The second is a granite boulder placed there in 1949 and dedicated on June 3 of that year to the memory of Don Gaspar de Portola, who, on July 14, 1769, set out on a voyage of rediscovery.

He was unsuccessful in two attempts, but the third proved successful and on June 3, 1770, Portola and Father Serra met at Monterey, accompanied by their military and religious followers.

Portola was made the first governor of Alta California. Father Serra founded both the Royal Presidio Chapel in Monterey and the mission at Carmel where he died on Aug. 28, 1784. He is buried in front of the altar there.

In 1891 Mrs. Jane Stanford, wife of the then U. S. Sen. Leland Stanford, who founded Leland Stanford University at Palo Alto in memory of their son, caused a granite monument to be erected on an eminence fronting the Bay of Monterey, and close by that spot where Junipero Serra first landed.

The statue represents Father Serra in full canonicals, with right hand held up in monitory gesture and left hand clasping a Bible to his chest.

At the spot where Junipero Serra landed and where the first mass was celebrated, the large Gothic cross was erected by the late James A. Murray, then a resident of New Monterey and owner of the residence Casa Las Ollas, which had been built by the late Dr. Harry Tevis, since torn down to make way for one of the large sardine canneries of that location.

The Sloat Monument is a bit further up the hill within the government, reservation and is a memorial to Commander John Drake Sloat, who raised the first American Flag over the Custom House at Monterey on July 7, 1846. The long life and patriotic career of the great admiral ended Nov. 28th, 1867, at the age of 86.

The Presidio of Monterey was founded on June 3, 1770. Structures were shortly afterward erected "by the side of Estro Creek," also described as being a "gunshot from the beach and three times as far from shore," where San Carlos church now stands.

Guns were mounted by the Spaniards on the hill overlooking the bay, where the Presidio is now. In 1822, after Mexico obtained her independence from Spain, a fort was built by the Mexicans. About the year 1843 Gov. Micheltorena ordered a deep ditch dug on the site of the present fort.