

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Famous California Firsts**

Famous firsts in California should be of interest to all our readers. There are probably many more but these start the ball rolling and the list will probably be much longer when it is completed.

The first forest fire in the Sierra Nevada of California occurred in 245 A.D. This date was determined by Ellsworth Huntington from his study of fire scars in tree rings of the big trees (*Sequoia Washingtoniana*).

First white child born in California was the son of Salvador Ygnacio and Gertrude Rives Linares of the overland expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza from Sonora to California. The birth took place in Middle Willows near the Arroya Santa Catarina, which is in the vicinity of Warner's Hot Springs, December 24, 1775.

The first potatoes in California were brought by the French navigator, Jean Francois Galaup de la Perouse from Chile in 1788. His was the first foreign ship to visit California after Spanish occupation. He visited Monterey September 14, 1786, as a French scientist.

The first church bells were brought to San Diego aboard the San Carlos or the San Antonio in 1769. Until a few years ago they hung in the belfry of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Old Town, San Diego.

The first expert cosmographer to map the California coast was Geronimo Martinez de Palacios, a member of Viscaino's expedition in 1602.

The first sugar beets planted in the state were from seeds brought from Mexico and planted on General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo's Petaluma ranch.

The first American doctor in California was John Marsh, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1836. On February 5, 1836, Marsh was granted permission to practice by the ayuntamiento or city council.

The first Protestant church in California was organized in Benicia in April, 1849. The first express service was established by C.L. Cody in July, 1847 between San Francisco and Fort Sutter.

The first presidential elector from California was Jose Cerverrubias of Santa Barbara. When he went to deliver the electoral vote of 1842 for Franklin Pierce, he was

welcomed at the wharf by the entire membership of Tammany Hall.

First public hospital was established on the outskirts of Monterey in 1844 as the results of the evidence of smallpox in that year. It was set up in a rented house. There was no doctor but two nurses and a burial squad was in attendance.

First United States mint in California was established in San Francisco by act of Congress, July 3, 1852. The building was completed early in 1854 and the branch mint began actual operation in April of that year. There had been considerable private coinage of gold in California from 1849 to 1856.

The first American ship to touch California was the "Chatham", with Peter Puget as master, in 1794.

The first roofing tiles were made in California at Mission San Luis Obispo about 1790. Once adopted at San Luis Obispo, their use spread rapidly to the other missions.

The first National Forest in California was the San Gabriel Timberland Reserve proclaimed by President Benjamin Harrison on December 20, 1892. This forest covered an area of 555,520 acres of timber and chaparral land in the Sierra Madre range of Southern California. The national forests of California now number more than 18 and cover a territory of over 200,000,000 acres.

The first American woman to come to live in California, it is told, was Mrs. Rachel Holmes, who was a passenger on the same ship with Thomas Oliver Larkin in 1832. She married Larkin the following year after learning that her husband had died before her arrival in Monterey.

The first organ mentioned in California history was a barrel organ presented to the then father-president of the missions, Fermin de Lasuen, by Capt. George Vancouver while they were both at San Diego in December, 1793. The contraption was first taken to Mission San Carlos. It is now in the museum at San Juan Bautista and bears the maker's inscription: "Dobbs, 22 Swan Street, London.

The Firsts in Monterey are interesting: First Custom House, First Theater, First Brick House, First Constitutional Convention, First American Flag was flown from the Old Custom House, the First federal building west of the Rockies, First Capital, First and only American consul, First French Consulate; First newspaper, the Californian; First religious services; First

trial by jury, First alcalde, First printing, 1834; First library, First post office; First county seat, First convent.