

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Early Explorers

Jean-Francois Galoup, Comte de la Perouse, commanding the French frigates Boussole and Astrolabe, arrived at Monterey on Sept. 14, 1786. He was the first friendly visitor of distinction from a foreign country to call at the new colony of Spain.

La Perouse stayed in California only 10 days and saw only the immediate vicinity of Monterey. Through gifts given to the missionaries, he is credited with the introduction of the potato to California.

La Perouse wrote of his voyages in "Voyages de la Perouse, Autor de Monde," in Paris in 1797, an English translation appearing in London in 1799.

Other navigators to visit the Port of Monterey were Alejandro Malaspina in 1791 and Capt. George Vancouver, an Englishman, in 1792. The latter christened his discovery "New Albion." While on shore he held the first Protestant religious ceremony to be recorded in California.

Sebastian Vizcaino, a Spanish merchant, ventured up the California coast while hunting for pearls and arrived at Monterey on Dec 16, 1602, commanding three ships, the San Diego, Santo Tomas and the Tres Reyes.

He anchored first in the area which now holds the name of San Diego Bay. Later he landed in Monterey and Mass was said by the friars. The port was named in honor of Gaspar de Zuniga, the Count of Monterey. Vizcaino spent 18 days here and had he lived he would have carried his plans for colonization and 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 of the chain of such establishments founded by the Franciscan padres.

Don Gaspar de Portola, governor of the Californias, accompanied by the President-Father Junipero Serra and the other Franciscan friars, left San Diego to seek the Port of Monterey and on June 3, 1770, established San Carlos de Borromeo at Monterey, the second mission in Alta California. The presidio was founded and the place taken in the name of Carlos III, of Spain.