

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **First Tourist in California**

Hernando de Alarcon was the first white man to set foot in the present State of California when he reached the mouth of the Colorado River on Aug. 18, 1540. Alarcon, with two ships, left Acapulco 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 at what is now Monterey on Nov. 17, 1542. He was in the service of Spain and he, not Alarcon, is credited as being the discoverer of California. Cabrillo commanded two vessels, the San Salvador and the Victoria. It was at a point in Southern California that he talked with Indians and then took possession of the land for the King of Spain. He also discovered several islands along the coast but failed to name them.

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

Following Cabrillo, Sir Francis Drake, a pious English buccaneer commanding the Golden Hind, landed at Drake's Bay north of San Francisco in 1579. He took possession of the land by setting up a post and nailing a sixpence to it.

With the expulsion of the Jesuits from Mexico in 1767, the Franciscans were given jurisdiction over the former Jesuit missions in Baja California. Fray Serra became president of the missions on July 14 of that year.

Serra labored two years in Baja California, then left to found the missions of Alta California. He is credited with the founding of six of these missions: San Diego de Alcalá, San Carlos de Borromeo in Carmel; San Antonio de Padua in southern Monterey County; San Luis Obispo, San Juan Capistrano and San Buenaventura.

We read in Fray Francisco Palou's diary that when the venerable Serra was consulting with the illustrious Inspector General Galvez about the first three missions which Galvez directed him to establish, Serra was troubled over the names and patrons assigned them.

"Senor," Serra asked, "is there no mission for our father (Saint Francis)?" and Galvez replied, "If Saint Francis

desired a mission let him see that his port is found and it will be placed there." And so Saint Francis had to wait.

Palou, continuing his writings of Serra, said of the mission founder: "His laborious and exemplary life is nothing but a beautiful field decked with every class of flowers of excellent virtues."

This deck of beauty remains today at Carmel Mission because of the laborious and dedicated work of mission restorer Harry Downie. How fortunate we are in having him at Fray Junipero Serra's favorite mission.