

BY MAYO HAYES O'DONNELL

Jean Francois Galoup de la Perouse, commanding the French Frigates "Boussole" and Astrolabe, the first friendly foreign visitor of distinction to California, arrived in Monterey on September 14, 1786. Perouse stayed in California ten days and saw only that part of it in the immediate vicinity of Monterey.

Through gifts to the missionaries and the military officials, he is credited with the introduction of the potato to California.

He wrote his "Voyages de la Perouse autour du monde" in Paris in 1797, and the English translation appeared in London in 1799.

France was an important factor in the history of Monterey and California prior to its acquisition by the United States and she was as anxious to get a foothold here as either Great Britain or the United States. After the capture of Monterey by Commodore Jones, France took immediate steps to place a consul in Monterey.

The exact date of the first French consul is not known, but

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as early as November 3, 1843, Francis Buisot, minister of foreign affairs, wrote to one Bosserons, whom he addressed as Consul at Monterey. Later, however, on October 28, 1843, Louis Gasquet was appointed and on his arrival sometime later he established his headquarters in the adobe building then located at Fremont and Abrego streets.

A complete story of the French Consulate in California, from 1843-1856 ran serially in the Quarterly of the California Historical Society. The author was Abraham P. N. Nasatir, who was accorded the privilege of translating the documents in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris. These archives were taken from "a box dedicated to the Consulate at Monterey" and consists of letters written from the French Consulate which the citizens of Monterey and the Monterey History and Art Association, Ltd. saved when they moved the entire building to El Estero Park.

For the reason that the Consulate was to be destroyed to make

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room for a modern building, under the sponsorship of the History and Art Association the adobe structure was thoroughly measured, taken apart brick by brick and moved to its present location and reconstructed in 1934. It is now owned by the City of Monterey and is the clubhouse and headquarters for the Peninsula Girl Scouts.

During 1937, the History and Art Association included the French Consulate in the Path of History and placed a historic marker in front of the charming little adobe building.

To return to an earlier history of Monterey we will relate the story of the earliest navigators to visit Monterey and the coast of California.

Hernando de Alarcon was the first white man to set foot on the present State of California when he reached the mouth of the Colorado River on August 18, 1540. Alarcon, with two

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ships, left Acapulco, Mexico to cooperate with the land expedition of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado seeking the Seven Cities of Cibola.

Don Juan Cabrillo, a Portugese navigator, set sail from Natividad on the west coast of Spain and was the discoverer of California. He commanded two vessels, the "San Salvador" and "Victoria." It was at a point in Southern California where he held a colloquy with the Indians and took possession of the land for the King of Spain. He discovered several islands along the coast but failed to name them.

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

Following Cabrillo came Sir Francis Drake, a pious English Buccaneer, commanding "The Golden Hind," landing at

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Drake's Bay, north of San Francisco. Drake took possession of the land for England by setting up a post and nailing a sixpence to it. He christened his discovery "New Albion".

While on shore he held what is supposed to be the first recorded religious service to be held in California.

Sebastian Vizcaino, a Spanish merchant, wanted to fish for pearls, so he ventured up the California coast and arrived in Monterey Bay on December 16, 1602, commanding three ships, the "San Diego", the "Santo Tomas" and the "Three Reys".

He anchored first in San Diego Bay and gave it the name.

On December 17, he landed at Monterey where mass was said by the friars. The port was named Monterey by him in honor of Gaspar de Zuniga y Aceveda, the Count de Monterey, ninth viceroy of Mexico. He spent eighteen days here and had he lived to carry out his plans for colonization, Monterey would have antedated Jamestown, Virginia by one year.

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One hundred and sixty-eight years ago, Monterey became the site of the principal presidio, as well as the capital of California, and the location of the chief mission in the chain of missions founded by the Franciscan missionaries. Don Gaspar de Portola, governor of the Californias, accompanied by Father Junipero Serra and other Franciscan monks, left San Diego seeking the port of Monterey, and on June 3, 1770, established Mission San Carlos de Monterey, the second mission in Alta California. The presidio was founded and the place taken in the name of Charles III, King of Spain.

Other navigators to visit the port of Monterey were: Alejandro Malespina, a Spanish navigator, in 1791; Captain George Vancouver, English explorer, in 1792. The latter wrote extensively of California in his "A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World," published in London in 1798.

The first American vessel to touch a California port, the

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"Otter" commanded by Captain Ebenezer Dorr, anchored at Monterey on October 29, 1796. Dorr was a northwest trader and visited Monterey to replenish his supplies before proceeding to China and the orient.

The Mexican rule in California lasted for twenty-five years, from 1822-1846, all of which time Monterey remained the capital. Twelve men were governors during that period: Arguello, Pio Pica, Zamorano, Castro, Gutierrez, Alvarado, Micheltorena. Alvarado was California's second native governor. He was born in Monterey, February 14, 1809. He became administrator of Monterey Custom House, and received numerous large land grants.

On October 19, 1842, Monterey surrendered to the American fleet under the erroneous impression that the United States and Mexico were at war. Commadore Thomas A. Catesby Jones, took possession of Monterey, and hoisted the American flag over the "castillo." The Californians signed articles of

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capitulation without a struggle. Two days later, upon discovering that he had been misinformed about the war and the suspected secession of California to England, Commander Jones took down the American flag, restored Monterey to the Californians, fired a salute to the Mexican flag, and sent a message of apology to General Manuel Micheltorena at Santa Barbara, who was then on his way north from Mexico to assume the governorship.

The covetous eyes of England, of Russia, and of France inevitably settled upon the northwest coast of California. The expeditions of La Perouse, of Vancouver, of Kotzebue, conducted in the sweet and unselfish cause of science, had carried the tales of fruitful valleys into distant courts, scheming lustfully for the extension of their kingdoms. But the United States was the one vigorous nation and California became part of that nation.

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On July 7, 1845, Captain William Mervine, commander of the U.S.S. "Cyane" and U.S.S. "Portsmouth" raised the American flag over the custom-house at Monterey, thus formally taking possession of California for the United States. The occupation was achieved without a single shot being fired.

Previous to the raising of the Stars and Stripes in Monterey, Thomas Oliver Larkin was appointed United States Consul for the Port of Monterey in California. Larkin entered upon his duties April 2, 1844, and served until June 23, 1846. He was the only United States Consul ever to serve in California.

Larkin built a handsome adobe dwelling in Monterey in 1835 which served as the consulate. He was born on the east coast and came to California as a Yankee trader. The home was given to the State of California as an historical monument on March 16, 1957, by Larkin's granddaughter, Mrs. Alice Larkin Toulmin.

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On October 17, 1845, Secretary of State, James Buchanan , instructed United States Consul, Thomas Oliver Larkin, to encourage the Spanish-Californians to resist French and English overtures, and intimated that should California decide to declare her independence from Mexico that the United States would render her its "kind offices."

August 15, 1846, "The Californian," first newspaper to be published in California, made its initial appearance as a weekly at Monterey. Walter Colton, who came to Monterey as chaplain on the ship of Commadore Sloat and was Monterey's first Alcalde, and Robert Semple, were the owners.

Alcalde Walter Colton impaneled at Monterey the first jury ever called to try a legal action in California on September 4, 1846.

The first postoffice in California was established in Monterey, November 21, 1848, and the office in San Francisco opened a day or so later.

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The publication of President James K. Polk's annual message authenticated the reported discovery of gold in California on December 5, 1850, and gave impetus to the gold rush to California. Most of the male population of Monterey left their families and sweethearts and rushed off in the "Gold Rush."

General Bennett Riley arrived at Monterey to assume the office of civil governor of California, under the instructions of the Secretary of War of the United States. It was General Riley who issued his famous proclamation calling for a Constitution, to be held in Monterey, September 1, 1849. The delegates assembled in Colton Hall (named for Alcalde Walter Colton, who built the building). That adobe two-story structure is now city owned and houses an historical Museum.

The convention consisted of forty-eight delegates and was presided over by Dr. Robert Semple. The constitution adopted was patterned mainly after those of New York and Iowa. Aside from

the usual provisions for the protection of life and property, the election of State officials and the convening of a legislature, it fixed the boundries of the State and outlawed slavery. It was signed by all deligates October 13, 1849.

Monterey County was one of the first of California's original Counties, numbering twenty-seven in all. California was admitted to the Union on September 9, 1850, when President Millard Fillmore signed a bill adopted by the United States Senate on August 13, by a vote of thirty-four to eighteen, and by the House of Representatives on September 7.

There are forty-one old and historic buildings still in existance in Monterey, either used as homes or as business property.

The State of California owns seven of these, the city one, and the History and Art Association owns two, and the remainder are privately owned.

The Monterey History and Art Association, Ltd., which has been

mentioned several times in this article, was organized in 1930, and incorporated under the laws of the State of California in January of 1931. In all these years, since the first meeting of a group of prominent citizens of the Monterey Peninsula at the Custom House, the Association's primary objective has been the preservation of those reminders of historic Monterey: the old adobe homes and significant buildings of the Spanish, Mexican and American California. The Association has also obtained through gifts, purchase and loans, numerous articles for exhibition in public museums such as the Custom House, Stevenson House, Pacific building, First Theatre, Casa de Ora, and Colton Hall. It has taken an active part in impressing on the people of Monterey the inestimable value of their heritage, and the importance of retaining for succeeding generations of Californians, adopted or native-born, those irreplaceable relics of a bygone age which embody the state's romantic history.

The Association sponsored the Historic Route through Monterey, indicated on the street by a red line, which when followed, guides the visitor to all the adobes and historic places in Old Monterey. These sites are also indicated with Historic markers also erected by the Association.

Monterey also is proud of the many "Firsts" we have here: first Custom House, first Theatre, first Brick House, first Constitutional Convention, first American flag over the Custom House, was the first Capital of the State, had the first and only American and French Consulate, first newspaper and first printing, first recorded religious service, first trial by jury, first Alcalde, first library, first postoffice, first county seat, first convent, where Maria Concepcion Arguello, daughter of a prominent early Californian, was the first woman in California to enter novitiate. She was the daughter of Don Jose Arguello, commandante of San Francisco in 1806, and governor of California, 1814-1845.

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W. E. P. Hartnell, an Englishman, with neither wealth nor fame, founded the first English speaking school of higher education here. He spoke and read Latin, Greek, German, French, Spanish and Russian. He started his school in Monterey and later built Hartnell College about twenty-five miles away and near Salinas.

We, in Monterey, are proud of the fact that the city was the capital of the Pacific empire from the Rockie Mountains to the sea, from the State of Oregon to Mexico, from 1776-1849. Every event of major importance between these periods began and ended in Monterey.

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RONALD REAGAN
GOVERNOR

State of California

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
SACRAMENTO 95814

April 2, 1968

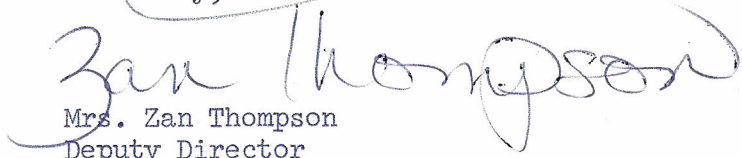
Mrs. Mayo O'Donnell
336 Pacific
Monterey
California

Dear Mrs. O'Donnell:

Thank you so much for your very informative history of Monterey. It was not only highly helpful but also quite interesting. I had not realized that Monterey had such a history of "firsts".

Thank you again for all your help.

Cordially,


Mrs. Zan Thompson
Deputy Director
Commission of the Californias

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