

## Did You Know....?

By Clem Dougherty

....that San Francisco Bay was discovered by land and not by sea? Yes, it's true. In our last newsletter we left Don Gaspar de Portola and part of the Sacred Expedition at Monterey Bay in a great quandary as to whether they had indeed discovered Monterey Bay. Portola was ordered to found the capital at Monterey. Not realizing that he had indeed discovered Monterey Bay, Portola thought the "illusive" bay was further north. The Sacred Expedition once again headed further north.



In proceeding north, Portola followed the rim of present day Monterey Bay to present day Santa Cruz and then northward up the present day San Mateo County coast. On October 31, 1769, the party stopped at where the coastal range (Devil's Slide just below San Francisco today) drops directly into the sea and prevented the party from proceeding further north along the coast. Thus, on November 1, 1769, Portola sent Sergeant Jose Ortega along with some scouts to the top of the coastal ridge above the camp to investigate a story told by Indians that a ship was anchored somewhere to the north. (There was no ship.) On the next day, November 2, 1769, some members of a deer-hunting party left the main Spanish party and climbed to the ridge above the camp and then returned to the camp reporting seeing a large estuary to the east from the top of the ridge (later named Sweeney Ridge). Sergeant Ortega and his party then returned to the camp and confirmed the sighting of a large estuary to the east. By accident the Spanish had now discovered San Francisco Bay. It is unclear as to whether it was Ortega's party or the second hunting party that were the first Europeans to discover San Francisco Bay. In all probability it was Ortega's party leaving the camp earlier on November 1, 1769, that became the first Europeans to discover San Francisco Bay. In any event, on November 4, 1769, the rest of the party traveled to the top of the ridge where, for the first time, the entire party including Portola beheld San Francisco Bay. This site is currently aside Highway 280 in the coastal range west of present day San Bruno. Thus, San Francisco Bay was discovered by land and not be sea. A huge surprise!

Portola knew right away that San Francisco Bay was not Monterey Bay, because San Francisco Bay sits inland away from the ocean whereas Monterey Bay was described as adjacent to the ocean. In time the Spanish would regard the discovery of San Francisco Bay as their greatest discovery, because in their estimation the Bay could hold all the ships of the world in the Bay at the same time. And because it was their greatest discovery and because the religious order founding the missions was the Franciscan Order, they gave to the Bay the name of their greatest saint - St Francis of Assisi, or, in Spanish, San Francisco de Asis (sic), a name given earlier to Drakes Bay but now applied to the greater Bay inland. But where was Monterey Bay? Portola remained confused.

(Sources: Rawls and Bean: California, An Interpretive History, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 36-39; Carner-Ribalta: Gaspar De Portola, Explorer of California, pp.153-155;185-191; Douglas Kyle.Ed.: Historic Spots in California, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp.4-5;174;214;334;368-369; Miquel Costanso, Peter Browning, Ed: The Discovery of San Francisco Bay. The Portola Expedition of 1769, the Diary of Miquel Costanso, p. 89.)