

Fray Junipero Serra

(founding the CA missions) by Winifred Wise (1967)

He was born 24Nov1713 in Petra, Spain & Died 28Aug1784 in Carmel, CA. He was a small sickly child, but healthier. At 16 his parents let him become a novice monk to get an education. He loved to learn & took his vows in 1731. He was 5'-2" & had a brilliant mind (doctorate in Theology).

At 36 he wanted to be a missionary about the same time the king of Spain wanted missions along the coast of CA to discourage Russia from taking control of the west coast of America. Ironically it would have been much harder for the American westward progress if Russian had control of CA. He left for Mexico (almost lost at sea on the 99-day voyage). The he had to walk 250 miles from Veracruz port to Mexico City.

1749 = He spent 9 yrs reaching the Pame Indians

1758 = He was promoted to oversee 5 missions & walked 5000 miles in 9 yrs.

1767 = Jesuit Priests were expelled from lower CA missions (mistrust from wealth in Europe) & Franciscan priests filled the void by travelling 600 miles to the Pacific. Only 400 white men lived on the peninsula at that time.

28Mar69 = at 55 he headed north on lower CA with 163 mules loaded with supplies from existing missions & cattle who were easily frightened. Serra got an infection in his leg that pained him for life. Scouts were sent ahead to look for water & grazing land in the desolate area. Sometimes the terrain was so tough they could only travel 5 hrs/day.

1Jul69 = Serra arrived in San Diego (SD) & found two ships, the San Carlos (took 110 days due to headwinds) & later the San Antonio (59 days) arrived in San Diego with soldiers & supplies, but most of the men were sick with scurvy. They sent the San Antonio with a skeleton crew back for reinforcements to meet them in Monterey. The Indians near San Diego wouldn't eat the white man's food since everyone was sick, but they loved clothes & beads (later that was the way to their heart). Portola left 8 soldiers & started on foot to Monterey. He felt an earthquake near Santa Ana River. They would reach the top of a peak only to see endless mountains (near Big Sur).

31Oct69 = they climbed a summit to be the first white men to see the San Francisco Bay, but were depressed because there was no ship. The fog did not allow them to see Monterey Bay. They erected a large cross on the beach with a note for the ship to find them heading south near death of starvation. They must have missed them on the return trip as well.

24Jan70 = Don Portola & his 60 men stumbled back into San Diego (all alive, but near death).

23Mar70 = the San Antonio arrived just before Portola was about to leave to get supplies.

16Apr70 = the San Antonio left for Monterey (46-day trip with Serra). 23 men stayed in SD.

3Jun70 = Portola's land party arrived (38 days). Portola returned to Mexico & Don Fages & his 40 men built buildings to hold supplies, a new mission & presidio. Indians found the cross in SF illuminating & fear it. Monterey Indians were more receptive of the gospel. Friction with Fages caused Serra to move to Carmel to build another mission more suitable to farming.

May71 = San Antonio returned with men & supplies. Serra was a visionary with a missionary's heart & had the driving force to get things done. The original missions were huts with thatched

roofs. Carmel would be his home mission for the rest of his life. Fages was a harsh leader & threatened the survival of the missions.

'72 Serra founded San Luis Obispo & went to SD for supplies, then onto Mexico. He took an 11 yr old Indian (probably the first cultural exchange student). They arrived in Guadalajara with Typhoid fever & they both almost died. After they recovered, they went on to Mexico City.

Feb 73 = he spoke with Viceroy Bucareli to present his case. Bucareli loved him & made some big changes. Up until then mail & supplies only came once a year.

Mar74 = a bigger ship (Santiago) returned to SD & later Monterey

Aug74 = It sailed to explore the Canadian coast (felt like Columbus in the uncharted waters)

'75 & '79 = it had other sea expeditions ultimately to the Bearing Strait

5Nov75 = the Indians were turned against the San Diego mission & burned it to the ground while the soldiers in the presidio slept.

1776 = Juan Bautista de Anza with 240 colonist & 1000 animals traveled 1600 miles to SF & built the presidio & mission there. Serra traveled up & down the coast from mission to mission on the El Camino Real. Don Rivera replaced Fages, but was too timid & was replaced with Don Neve (new governor of CA) who built a stockade as the seat of CA. Neve had strict orders not to let English Captain Cook land on CA soil.

'77 = established the town of San Jose & mission Santa Clara

'78 = power shift in Spain caused loss of Bucareli (missions' biggest supporter). At that time there were 3 presidios & 8 missions.

'81 = established the town of Los Angeles. With the outlook of war between Spain & England the supply ships left & the missions were on their own.

'82 Fages replaced Neve

'84 = Serra's health was leaving him & visited all of the missions one last time before he died.

1785-1821 missions boomed under the leadership of father Lasuen (stone or adobe chapels & tile roof).

1821 = Mexico won their independence from Spain & missions became less important

1833 = missions were turned over to the Catholic Church (but with less land) as the settlers were taking over.

1875 = some of the land lost were restored as Indian reservations.

Note:

Most of the missions are spaced about 30 miles apart so travelers could be in a safe place for the night. All of the missions have been restored over the years.

1452 = Juan Cabrillo found San Diego Bay

1602 = Sebastean Vizcano found Monterey Bay.

Quotes: "There is no bad from which God does not come." (Costano)

"Father, allow my overflowing heart to express itself. Would that this bell be heard throughout the world..." (Junipero Serra after vigorously ringing the bell in Carmel for the first time).

Books: Historical Account of Father Junipero Serra (in Spanish by Father Francisco Palou in 1787)