
CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SURVEY SERIES
HISTORIC LANDMARKS, MONUMENTS AND STATE PARKS

Edited by Clark Wing

La PUNTA de los MUERTOS

San Diego County

Registered Landmark #57

by

James Nebergall

Written under auspices
Of Work Projects Administration
Official Project #665-08-3-147

Sponsored by State of California, Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks

Berkeley, 1939

La PUNTA de los MUERTOS

It is not enough to tell the simple story of what happened at La Punta de los Muertos, though the story is touching enough to enlist our sympathy and interesting enough to hold our attention. To understand the reasons for La Punta de los Muertos and its significance one must know something of what came before as well as what followed after. The adverse conditions besetting the San Antonio and the San Carlos, were causes that wrote on the map the name La Punta de los Muertos, or Dead Men's Point, as surely as the pioneers of the Sacred Expedition of Galvez were the founders of California. It is, therefore, necessary to describe in some detail the voyages of the San Antonio and the San Carlos, (the Mayflower of the Pacific), the ships that brought the first colonists to San Diego Bay.

The story of La Punta de los Muertos is the story of the birth of California. It is a fascinating story. It begins with high hopes and a splendid vision of an enlarged temporal empire as well as a great spiritual one. An empire extended and upheld on the one hand by the soldiers, the civil officers, and the state, and on the other hand, established, nurtured, and brought to a success that appeared most improbable at first, through the untiring efforts of Father Serra and his padres. It descends to the depths of

deepest despair. Death laid a heavy hand upon the project and almost strangled it at its inception. But these were heroic men. They fought hunger and cold, adversity, despair, death - and conquered. They became the founders of California, the harbingers of civilization on the Pacific Coast.

The Bay of San Diego was discovered in the year 1542 by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, who named it San Miguel. Sixty years later, in the year 1602, while exploring the coast of California, Sebastián Viscaíno (Vizcaíno), the Spanish navigator and explorer, visited it. He re-named it San Diego de Alcalá - not after St. James, as is often asserted, but after St. Diego, a holy Franciscan who lived¹ in the 15th century at Alcalá de Henares, in New Castile.

Viscaíno gave a glowing account of the new land. Its spacious harbors, towering trees, majestic mountains, and fertile soils won his unstinted praise and begot in the Spaniards a desire to possess them. But the Spanish Government had all it could attend to in other parts of its far flung empire, and at home. Funds were not available to carry out the project of occupying the land. So the desire slept - for one hundred and sixty-seven years; until the greedy advance of the Russians down the west coast from

1. Aubrey Drury, California: an intimate guide, 33.

Alaska to Central California, and the covetous maneuvers of both the English and the French awakened the Spanish Crown to the necessity of occupying Alta California or losing control of New Spain.

Charles III, one of the great kings of Spanish history, was on the throne. He decided to carry out the plan formed by Felipe III as early as 1600. He was fortunate in securing persons peculiarly fitted for the task in hand - that of further exploring and colonizing Alta California. José de Galvez, whom he appointed Visitor-general of New Spain was a man of unbounded energy and enthusiasm and this became his pet scheme to such an extent that he is often referred to as its father. He left no stone unturned to insure its success. He worked, planned, organized, encouraged and inspired. Others caught the fire of his enthusiasm and lent a ready hand.

Don Gaspar de Portolá was made commander-in-chief of the entire force - hence the name often applied, The Portola Expedition. He was a courageous Spanish soldier of the old school, somewhat jealous of his rights, determined almost to the point of obstinacy, and loyal to the instructions of his superiors. Another person whose presence was, no doubt, as important to the success of the enterprise as that of any other was Father Junípero Serra of the Franciscan Order, who marshaled the spiritual forces of the expedition.

He had long wanted to be a missionary to the benighted heathen, to gather them under the protecting wings of the church. To him as to Galvez the cause was a holy one and its greatest objective was the establishment of the Catholic faith among the gentiles. Hence it was known as The Sacred Expedition of Galvez.

The expedition was divided into four parts - two divisions by land and two by sea. The land forces were under Portola and Rivera y Moncada while the two vessels, the San Carlos and the San Antonio were commanded by Captain Vicente Vila (who was also commander of the sea divisions), and Captain Perez, respectively.

The San Carlos was loaded at the San Blas warehouse with an extremely heavy cargo of what were considered the necessities of the expedition. It was estimated they had food supplies for a year, in addition to a few live cattle, tools, seeds, church furnishings and 1,000 pesos in money. After a stormy crossing of the Gulf of California, the San Carlos put into the harbor of La Paz in an unseaworthy condition. Here it was repaired and made ready for its long journey. It was a vessel of only two hundred tons and carried eleven sails. Besides her crew there were Lieutenant Pedro Fages with twenty-five Catalan volunteers, Fray Hernando Parron, Dr. Pedro Prat, four cooks, two blacksmiths, servant boys, and others.

Galvez gave Vila his final instructions and impressed upon him the objectives of the expedition which were in brief: (1) to establish the Catholic faith, (2) to extend the Spanish domain, and (3) to check the ambitious schemes of foreign powers.

Father Serra came on board January 6, 1769 and blessed the packet, sang the mass and blessed the standards. "The litany was sung and other devotions to Our Lady." Captain Vila weighed anchor at midnight January 9. The San Carlos stopped at Cape San Lucas for water and to take on hay, then on the night of January 15, set sail for San Diego. All were elated and expectant. Little did they know what awaited them. The next day Galvez climbed a high hill to look for the San Carlos. There she was, unable to make any headway because of contrary winds. All day - yes, for four anxious days he watched the San Carlos struggle with the wind and wave to no avail. But finally the wind abated, the San Carlos gathered way, and the mists of the gray ocean swallowed her. Silence and loneliness enveloped her.

Her sister ship, the San Antonio, sailed a month later. The crew and cargo were much the same as that of the San Carlos. Under the Captain Perez' skillful guidance, and generally favorable winds, the ship sped merrily along to its destination. Yet all was not well with the sailors and passengers. Scurvy, the scourge of the sea overtook them. Many

were ill and some died. All on board were sick or disabled except fathers Viscaino and Gomez. After forty-five days at sea they arrived safely at the Port of San Diego April 11, 1769, fully expecting to find the San Carlos riding within the protecting arms of land-locked San Diego Bay.

As they entered the narrow inlet which the proud San Diegoans now call the Silver Gate they looked in vain for the San Carlos. Only the placid waters of the bay, the towering snow-clad mountains, the silent pines, and the wondering awe-struck natives greeted their eyes. Past Point Guijarros they sailed, rounded the headland and cast anchor behind Loma's projecting arm, safe from the winds and waves.

The superstitious whims, fears, and conjectures of sailors of that day the world over, were by no means lacking in the sailors who manned the San Antonio. Amazed Indians gathered on Point Loma and stared wide-eyed at those who had been wafted hither on the backs of "whales with wings." As the sick and weary sailors set foot on the sandy shores of the little harbor behind Point Guijarros, later called the anchorage, the Indians, fearful, yet consumed with curiosity, advanced warily to meet them. The sun had been shining brightly but now its brightness slowly dimmed. These children of nature and the sailors alike were quick to note the change. Was this a sign from heaven signaling the coming of these strange white men? Awe-struck the Indians watched and waited.

Their absorbing interest in the strangers was shifted to the phenomenon of a solar eclipse, which was followed by an earthquake. The sailors, too, were impressed - their superstitious fears aroused. The darkness settled down upon them. The earth writhed and swayed, the great ocean was in tumult. Was this the end - the day of doom? In abject fear the sailors fell upon their knees, imploring the saints' protection, while the imitative children of nature did likewise. But the earth calmed her troubled self, the veiled eye of heaven looked again upon the earth with its accustomed brightness, and the sailors and Indians alike arose from their knees with a deep sense of relief.

On February 20th the enthusiastic Galvez had written: "We have not had a day of northwest ... the winds have been so favorable that we all deem the ships as already at the doors of San Diego, and even as at anchor in that port. Both sail like birds."

The sailing antics of the San Carlos were, however, decidedly unbird-like. On the 21st, six days out from Cape San Lucas, Captain Vila was alarmed by the report of the ships' caulker that there were "three-and-a-half inches of water in the pump."² The ship was laboring in heavy seas,

2. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 15.

pitching and rolling, tossed about like a chip on the heaving billows. Well might Vila be alarmed. He knew that if the water in the pump was salt water, the boat was leaking. They must examine all the seams from the inside. The caulker might have to get out in a little box slung over the ship's side. While hanging there dashed this way and that by the rolling ship, buffeted by the winds and threatened by the leaping waves, he would have to caulk the oakum into the opening seams, lest all be lost.

The roaring winds and the angry sea made steering the ship a difficult and dangerous task. Often when a huge wave struck the rudder, the tiller (an iron bar by which the rudder was moved) would swing with great force. About four o'clock the morning of the seventh, Augustin Medina, a sailor, stepped too near the tiller. It swung viciously and poor Medina lay moaning on the deck with a broken leg, their first casualty. Dr. Prat, the surgeon was called to assuage the pain and give him the best treatment the circumstances would permit.

The work of sailing the vessel through the heavy sea was arduous in the extreme. The vigorous exercise in the open air gave the seamen ravenous appetites. When the task in hand was finished they rushed to the galley for "first helpins," but sometimes this did not help much. With a sudden lurch of the vessel a collision of two would-be

diners often bumped heads and sent rations flying far from eager mouths, or the dashing wave swished into the sea as food for fishes, the hungry sailor's dinner.

They were thirsty too, but the water was strictly rationed. They had pumped out the "three and a half inches of water" found in the pump on the sixth day out, but on the seventh, they found there the same amount - not of salt water as they supposed, but of fresh water. They examined the casks and found to their dismay that the violence with which the vessel pitched, rolled, and lunged about had caused the staves of the casks to spread. Two casks were quite empty and one reduced to half its volume. The next day still more casks were found to be empty, and the remaining ones only half full.³ This condition caused Vila great anxiety. Vila made frequent surveys of the ship, making every effort to conserve the water and to force the ship through the unruly seas toward her destination.

On February 12, 1769, the San Carlos had been fighting wind and wave for twenty-seven days, having covered a distance of 967 miles, a daily average of thirty-six miles - not a very bird-like performance. On one fortunate day they made ninety-three miles.

3. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 15.

They sighted the Island of Guadalupe on February 15 - one month from the day they set sail. For four weary days they made every effort to land, but contrary winds made this impossible. At last Vila gave it up and sailed south examining the coast as he went. He encountered extreme cold weather. Four hundred and fifty miles farther south he sailed but not a harbor could he find. He had now traveled about 1,500 miles and the San Carlos needed repairing badly. The water was running low. They had almost given up hope of finding a landing place, when they sighted the Island of Cedros. Here with great difficulty they filled nine casks with brackish water, carried them three-quarters of a league over a road full of steep places, and finally hoisted them aboard. They then proceeded on their way.

Late in March (the 19th) they found better water on another island. But the bad water had already done its secret mischief. Now they had water, but not a whiff of wind. Here they waited impatiently until March 23, when a freshening wind filled the sails of the San Carlos and she headed out to sea in a westerly direction. They sailed westward for a full week. Then they sighted the Island of Guadalupe, where they had tried to land a month and a half before, and the contrary winds had carried them out to sea. Now, (April 4th) they did not care so much about landing

since they had water, but were most anxious to get on with the journey northward. But that was the very thing they could not do. Westward, still westward the relentless winds drove the ship for twelve endless days. Three hundred miles out to sea, they were driven every mile farther away from their goal. Captain Vila knew by his calculations that the Port of San Diego was receding. He knew something else that was extremely disquieting. Scurvy, was creeping stealthily upon his crew. On April the nineteenth it seized the first of its victims, Fernando Alvarez, the boatswain's second mate and cockswain of the launch, who was buried at sea.⁴ The sickness was spreading and anxiety was increasing.

On the 16th the wind had changed, and they were at last headed north, though their progress was uncertain. On the twentieth they made eighty-seven knots, but the next day shifting winds and a choppy sea reduced their advance for a long twenty-four hours to a mere nine knots, while rain squalls and fog made the ship a dismal den. The ship reeked with moisture and nauseating odors because of its overladen condition and the sickness that was fast spreading among them.

4. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 71.

Vila writes: "Sunday, April 23. On this day the sick and those who had not fulfilled their religious duties confessed and received the sacrament." Those who were able, dressed themselves in their best clothes - if they had any - and entered the confessional chamber heavy-hearted, to emerge in a more hopeful mood.

Days crept by. But the scurvy made haste. It attacked the strongest and speedily reduced them to the state of living skeletons. The second victim, Manuel Reyes the pilot, was lowered to a watery grave, April 24th. Over one-half the crew were helpless. The fetid air, the poor and scanty food (for much of it had spoiled and little was left), and the general air of gloom that had settled over them did not tend to hasten recovery. Their prayers comforted them, but their probable fate was the anxious thought of every soul. Those who were yet able to be about - and their number was decreasing daily - were weak and depressed. They scanned the horizon in vain. No land came to view. Only waves - ceaseless oncoming waves. Would they ever reach the haven? The stoutest hearts faltered. Comrades were dying, hope was sinking.

Suddenly the excited voice of the boy who tended the hourglass rang out: "Land! Land!" The glad tidings revived their sinking hopes. The sick sat up, and cheerfulness replaced gloom.

But the journey was not finished though the end was almost in sight. They sighted land on April 26th and continued to go north to latitude thirty-three degrees and fifty-six minutes, which point was reached April 27th. Viscaino's (Vizcaino) diary had advised going to latitude thirty-four degrees before turning south because in this way he would have the advantage of favorable northwest winds in the Santa Barbara Channel, thus avoiding the necessity of tacking. According to Viscaino's reckoning, San Diego was in latitude thirty-three degrees, but actually it was half a degree farther south. Thus Vila sailed his ship too far north by one hundred and sixty miles.

They took their course down the Santa Barbara Channel and on the morning of April 28th, when the fog lifted, the rocky islets which Viscaino called Los Coronados came in view. "They were the best and surest marks for making the port of San Diego."⁵

It was high time the voyage was concluded. The long voyage and cold weather had multiplied the hardships of this crewless ship - for crewless indeed it was. Two had already died. Also, twenty-two sailors and ten of the soldiers of Fages were crowded into the narrow stinking hold

5. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 89.

of this death ship, stricken with scurvy. This terrible disease had made rapid strides since they began drinking the brackish water secured at Cedros Island. First it attacked the legs, causing them to become huge swollen masses. Their arms hung limp and their teeth fell out. Those who could move at all staggered at their tasks.

Now with the greatest effort they furled the sails and made the ship ready to enter the harbor of San Diego. As if their lot was not hard enough, they now encountered new troubles when the San Carlos became entangled in the seaweed of a kelp field that grew in great profusion outside the harbor. At one place the ship failed to respond to the helm and almost ceased to move. Eventually, by hugging the shore and feeling their way by frequent soundings they cleared the fields of seaweed, and at five o'clock in the afternoon of April 29th, 1769 passed through the Silver Gate. At five o'clock A.M. April 30th, they rounded Point Guijarros and came to the anchorage or little harbor where they discovered the San Antonio. Here they dropped anchor. All on board had come under the blight of scurvy.

Yes, the ship had sailed into the harbor. It was indeed the San Carlos. But it might have been a ghost ship for all the activity on board, though they did fire a salute in answer to the San Antonio's booming guns. No boat was put out. Not a foot trod the deck. She was as silent as a tomb

after the echoes of the salute died away. Captain Perez and his men wondered. His own crew had not fared so well for they, too, were scurvy-ridden.

At last Captain Perez decided to investigate. Accordingly, he selected a few sailors who were well enough to man the launch and together with Fray Juan Gómez and Fray Juan Viscaino made his way to the San Carlos, arriving about eight o'clock P.M. Captain Perez climbed aboard to extend his greetings to Captain Vila. While Vila and Perez held an earnest conversation Captain Fages, Constanso, and Estorace joined those in the launch and immediately they set out to find a suitable watering place.

One of the main objects of the expedition, was to occupy the port of Monterey, which Viscaino had so glowingly described. But considering the circumstances, Captain Vila⁶ decided that this was impossible. He wrote:

Considering the condition of the San Carlos ... that this packet had only two seamen in good health; that the rest were ill with more than half the soldiers in similar condition, without medicine and fresh food to help them, as everything had been eaten up on the voyage; and in addition to this; seeing that the surgeon, Don Pedro Prat, was unable to help owing to his own serious illness, ... for all these reasons I determined to delay the voyage of the San Antonio.

6. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 97.

The two ships were now riding at anchor near Point Guijarros safe from storms in a haven of rest. Behind or back of them was the bold headland which Cabrillo in 1542 called La Punta de California.⁷ "La Loma de San Diego!" was the glad cry that burst from the lips of Moncada's faithful followers as they stood upon the mesa above the bay and saw this landmark of San Diego Bay for the first time. Custom has abbreviated the name Point Loma.⁸ It is indeed a very important point in California history.

Had the Spaniards been in a mood to appreciate it, there was much in the scene that lay before them to excite their admiration and intrigue their interest. To the south lay the bulging head and long narrow neck of the Coronado Peninsula which guards the harbor from the Pacific with its white glistening sands, which is now called the Silver Strand. Outside, the barking seal, the spouting whale and the rolling porpoise add life to the scene. Pelicans ride the smooth back of the ocean swell like stately ships. Myriads of ducks dot the water of the bay while along the shore scud

7. Winifred Davidson, Where California began, 32.

8. The name "Punta de la Loma de San Diego" or "Point of the Hill of San Diego" probably first appeared on Don Juan Pantoja y Arriago's map of 1782. Davidson, Where California began, 63-68; H. H. Bancroft, History of California, I, 456 (map); Z. S. Eldredge, ed. History of California, I, 104 (map). The name "Loma" was firmly fastened to the headland following the arrival of the two land expeditions.

the curlew, the willet, the plover and the snipe. Away to the southwest the Coronados thrust up their sharp outlines hundreds of feet above the shimmering sea. South in the blue, hazy distance are the tablelands and lofty mountain peaks of old Mexico. San Ysidro and San Miguel to the east seem near at hand. Farther away pine-crested Cuyamaca rears its head 7,000 feet into the blue. Volcan and Palomar catch the eye, while snow-crowned San Jacinto and San Bernardino tower miles high as they glisten in the sunshine a hundred miles away. Among these giants are numerous others, scores of them higher than the highest of the Alleghenies or the Adirondacks. When the sun turned the peaks to gold and the shadows and purple haze filled the canyons, it made a picture that only the Great Artist could paint, and lifted the soul of the beholder to the heights of the sublime.

But while the beauties of nature were laid out with lavish hand, few of those who came saw their splendor. Down in the reeking hold of the ill-smelling ship lay most of them. The first concern of those able to be about was fresh water and fresh air. They must find a source of fresh water and they longed to be ashore away from the scurvy-ridden ship. When they looked ashore, therefore, it was with an eye alert for a good place to establish a camp or a possible source of good drinking water. They had arrived late in the afternoon of Saturday, April 29, 1769. At ten o'clock the next morning

Don Pedro Fages, Don Miguel Constanco, two of the missionary fathers and some of those who were well enough to go, set out on an exploring expedition in search of the precious water. Such water as the crew of the San Antonio had, was obtained from holes they had scooped out near the beach where the water collected. But it was so brackish they could not drink it.

It might here be said that Captain Perez' failure to explore the region and find water was the result of strict orders from Galvez to take no unnecessary risks, and to the fact that the San Antonio carried no soldiers. Now that Fages and his Catalan soldiers were at hand, they set out from the shore where the ship's launch had landed them to explore what to them was wholly unknown country full of lurking dangers.

Soon they came upon a band of Indians armed with bows and arrows. The Indians were wary. They did not know just what to make of the strange white men with their banners, uniforms and guns. So they kept at a distance. The Spaniards were most anxious to overtake them so that they might by some means learn the location of a supply of good water. They waved white flags and hailed them but the

9. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 93.

Indians understood the meaning of neither signal and kept aloof. At last the Spaniards sent forward a soldier alone, who laid his weapons upon the ground and made gestures of peace. He was allowed to approach. When he inquired through the medium of signs, where water could be found, the Indians pointed to a grove which could be seen at quite a distance to the northeast, giving him to understand that a river or creek flowed through it.¹⁰ After a three league walk they came to the place which proved to be the bank of a small river (the San Diego River) which emptied into a lagoon, where at high tide the launch could enter to obtain water.

The Indians were called Diegueños because they lived near San Diego. In the southern part of San Diego County were the North and South Diegueños and Kamia, members of the Yuman family, while divisions of the Shoshonean nation¹¹ occupied the northern portion of what is now San Diego County. There were about four thousand Indians (estimated) living in the San Diego region.

These Indians lived in rancherías, a Spanish word meaning villages. Their houses were very crude affairs, some of which were individual, some communal. They were made of

10. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 27.

11. Federal writers' project, San Diego, a California city, 21.

branches and tule, and were covered with earth. Father Palóu noted twenty rancherías in the vicinity of San Diego Bay.

These Indians were a flat-nosed, broad-faced, brown-skinned race, stockily built and athletic. Many of the friars disparaged them in their reports, but Father Crespi said they were apt in mechanical arts and that they readily learned Spanish.

The men wore no clothing while the women were decently dressed in skins. But the males made up for their lack of clothing through the use of paint and feathers for personal adornment, nor did they neglect tattooing.

These Indians in point of culture were perhaps a little above the Stone Age level. No metals were in use in this region, all tools and weapons being made of stone, bone, wood and shell. Their weapons were bows and arrows, wooden swords, spears, slings, clubs, and stones.

Their food and especially their habits of eating would not appeal to the civilized person of today. While vegetable products such as acorns, mesquite, beans, various wild vegetables, onions, berries, etc., formed the backbone of their diet they were not averse to taking advantage of an occasional gift from Father Neptune in the form of a dead whale. Nor were such titbits as mice, snakes, frogs and grasshoppers despised. Deer, rabbits, fish and birds added variety to the diet when they could be secured.

Shellfish near the bay were extensively used. Their primitive cooking was done over heated stones placed in a hole in the ground over which a layer of dirt completed the Indians' fireless cooker.

The religious beliefs of these Indians remain obscure. Apparently they had little idea of a future existence. The introduction of the belief in and worship of Chinigchinick about one hundred years before this had modified the old beliefs and rituals, their religion being a compound of the old and the new. Medicine men plied their trade here much as they do elsewhere among primitive peoples.¹²

The beliefs and practices of the Indian filled the pious friars with horror and one of their greatest concerns was the conversion of the natives from their heathen practices and beliefs to Christianity, and to bring them into the church. They had high hopes of civilizing the heathen forthwith. But the Indians had other ideas. They were proud, boastful, arrogant and much set in their ways, clinging tenaciously to the ways of their fathers. They resisted with more than usual determination the efforts of the fathers to substitute a new faith for their old superstitions. Quite willingly they accepted whatever gifts were proffered, especially any kind of cloth, for which they had a mania. They

12. Federal writers' project, San Diego, a California city, 21-24.

did not confine themselves to receiving, however, but with consummate cunning stole whatever they fancied, but left untouched all forms of the Spaniards food, of which they stood in deathly fear.

The Indians had done the explorers a great favor by guiding them to the life giving water. They were too far away from it, however, since in their exhausted and weakened condition it was imperative that they conserve both their time and their strength, as the tasks of the many had fallen on the few who were able for duty.

Accordingly they changed their position. Vila records for May 3: "I stood inside in order to approach the river or watering place as nearly as possible." Now their prows were pointed toward the eastern shore of the harbor. They approached the shore with the river on their left or port side. So much sand had been deposited in the harbor during freshets that they could not get close to the mouth of the river, nor could they approach the shore because of shallow water until they got near what is now the foot of Market Street, San Diego. This point will be discussed in detail later on. At last after four days of maneuvering, because the ships were practically crewless, the ships were anchored in deep water off La Punta de los Muertos.

13. Wm. E. Smythe, History of San Diego, II, 690.

In Vila's diary we read: "From Wednesday, 3 to Thursday, May 4 ... At 5 o'clock in the afternoon several soldiers with Fray Fernando Parron, Don Pedro Fages and Don Jorge Estorace went off in the launch to bury the dead seamen ashore. At sunset they returned aboard."

In these simple words did the diarist record a tragic episode. One might almost think him heartless, from the brevity of his words. But the dead were not interred with as little ceremony as the words of this brief account

14

imply. As Miss Davidson remarks:

To absolve the adventurers of their sins, to keep their souls sweet, to attend them in their last agonies, to give them Christian burial, friars and priests accompanied every expedition.... The need on that day for immediate burials must have been most urgent. There was little time for ritual, there were scant materials at hand for either coffin or pall. The body was covered with a sheet or piece of canvas, or officer's cloak or clergyman's cossack; the head was placed upon a stone; about the body, on the ground, stood a candle or two, possibly four. Prayers for the dead were begun; and while the able-bodied worked the prayers went on constantly until the grave had been dug. A little procession was formed; a cross-bearer preceding the priest who walked before the

14. Davidson, Where California began, 151-152.

rude litter on which rested the corpse; without coffin, without tolled bells.

In the solemn stillness of that quiet evening they buried their dead in sorrow. With heavy hearts and much foreboding they returned to their ships, for indeed they knew not whose turn it would be tomorrow to answer the call of the grim reaper. It was imperative that the men be gotten on shore as quickly as possible. The cramped quarters, poor ventilation, and general inconvenience of the small packets promoted the spread of the disease threatening the lives of all.

They moved the ships somewhat closer to the mouth of the river though they could not approach very near because of the shallowness of the bay, due to extensive deposits of mud and sand during freshets. Vila says that after reconnoitering they "decided to build the shelters for the sick on a hillock close to the beach and a cannon shot from the packets."

15

Miguel Constanso wrote:

Close to the beach on the east side of the port a small enclosure was built with a parapet of earth and brushwood and mounted with two cannon. Some sails and awnings

15. Miguel Constanso, "The narrative of the Portola expedition of 1769-1770," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, I, 33.

were landed from the vessels and with these, two tents suitable for a hospital were made. On one side were placed the tents of the two officers, missionaries and surgeon. When everything was ready to receive the sick, they were brought on shore in the launches and were housed as comfortably as possible.

It was a terrible task to construct the camp for the sick, since so few were able to work. They heaved a sigh of relief when it was finished, hoping now for rest and the improvement of the sick. The ailing ones had been moved to the beach on the 8th (May). But the very next day the sails of the San Antonio were brought ashore for erection of another shelter for ten additional sick men from her crew.

The conditions under which they labored, suffered and died can hardly be imagined. Proper food was not to be had. Their beds were earth and leaves. There were no nurses and only one doctor who was practically without medicine and who was himself "all but prostrated with the same disease." Water! water! was the constant cry of the fever tormented patients. It took as long as 15 hours to go in the launch and get a load of about ten casks of water, which was enough for only one day. This may have been due to the fact that they could enter the mouth of the river only during high tide. Probably they could not return until the next high tide began to recede.

The pale phantom of death stalked arrogantly through the miserable little shelters. "Every day two or three of them died and the whole expedition which had been composed of more than ninety men, was reduced to only eight soldiers who were in condition to assist in guarding the ships, handling the launches, protecting the camp, and waiting upon the sick."¹⁶

High tribute is paid to Dr. Prat by all the early writers for his heroic and untiring efforts in this crisis. Weary and ill, he stumbled through the woods and fields in search of herbs whose healing properties he knew. Though he fought nobly, it was a losing fight. By day their fever-inflamed bodies suffered from the heat of the sun, while at night the sudden drop in temperature chilled them to the bone. Daily they grew weaker while the number of graves on the beach multiplied.

Heat, cold, starvation and despair took turns in weakening their bodies and crushing their spirits. As the number of the dead increased, and the number of able ones shrank to a pitiable few, the timidity of the Indians was replaced, first, by confidence, then boldness, and finally, arrogance. They became an ever-present pest. Day and night

16. Constanse, "The narrative of the Portola expedition," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, I, 33.

they came in large numbers begging for what they fancied and stealing all they could. It was impossible to keep them out. They created a great deal of confusion and noise much to the detriment of the sick. Cloth, and more cloth was their greatest desire, and their avaricious eyes and covetous fingers neglected no opportunity to satisfy this desire. Any garment or piece of cloth of any kind left carelessly exposed was seized on the instant, by some slinking Indian, who immediately made off with it as fast as his legs could carry him. They even stole the sheets from right under the sick and dying men - but none could prevent their devilish depredations. In their rude boats of tule, in the dark silence of the night, they stole up to the San Carlos, boarded her, cut away some of the ropes and pieces out of the sails. A guard had to be left on board thereafter. But there were not enough able men to guard everything.

But while the Indians thus tormented the Spaniards, their insatiable desire for cloth, beads and ornaments, probably saved the colonists from complete annihilation. Through the exchange of the coveted cloth, whatever garments they could spare and the tawdry trinkets and beads, that were brought for trading purposes, they were able to secure fresh food, of which they stood in such dire need.¹⁷

17. Harry C. Hopkins, History of San Diego, its pueblo lands and water, 33.

The arrival of one of the land divisions under Rivera y Moncada on May 14th caused much rejoicing and created new hope. He brought "twenty-five soldiers, two friars, three mulattoes and some Christian Indians."¹⁸ All of the party which had been on the way 51 days, was free from scurvy. On May 29th Portola, the commander of the expedition, and Governor of California, arrived with an advance guard, to be followed by the entire party on July 1st. In this latter group was Father Serra, who endeared himself to all by his kindly service and his unfailing optimism. He wrote his name very large in the history of California and its missions.

The first camp site was chosen because it was necessary to guard both the ships and the camp with the same small force, which they dared not divide because of fear of the Indians.¹⁹

When Rivera arrived, he was astounded to behold the plight of his plague-stricken comrades. Without delay he selected a new camp site. This was about a league north of the first camp site at what came to be known as Presidio Hill, near which Old Town later grew up. It was on the right bank of the San Diego River²⁰ which then flowed into the Bay of San Diego instead of into Mission Bay as it now does. The

-
18. Hopkins, History of San Diego, its pueblo lands and water, 33.
 19. Constanco, "The narrative of the Portola expedition," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, I, 35.
 20. Ibid.

situation was admirably chosen in respect to water supply, natural defense, sanitation and view. Here a stockade for defense was erected; huts were built for the men and corrals for the animals were provided. "Within three days after his Rivera arrival, the sick were transported from the desolate pest place on the beach to the clean fresh camp."²¹

On July 2nd, the day following his arrival, Serra had a most painful duty to perform. He conducted the solemn ceremony of giving Christian burial to thirty-one of the original members of the Sacred Expedition who had set out for the new land so hopefully.²² This day was Serra's first Sunday in California. The religious ceremonies marking it were celebrated with all possible pomp. An altar was erected, a solemn Thanksgiving hymn was chanted, and booming guns supplied the music of pealing organ and their smoke replaced the incense offering to St. Joseph, their patron saint. "Of the two hundred nineteen men who had left the peninsula, but one hundred twenty-six remained to take part in the celebration."²³ Some of the land division had died. Others had deserted. No wonder they called this La Punta de los Muertos - Dead Men's Point.

21. A. H. Fitch, Junipero Serra, the man and his work, 111.

22. Hopkins, History of San Diego, its pueblo lands and its water, 35.

23. Fitch, Junipero Serra, the man and his work, 111.

On July 16th the Mission San Diego was established. The first mission bell in California rang out its glad message of good will, the solemn dedicatory exercises were performed and the first California mission began its eventful history. About this time, on July 14th, Portolá had set out for Monterey with those who were able to go, but they were so emaciated that they were referred to as living skeletons.

The ships could not be sailed as there were no sailors to sail them. Of the crew of the San Carlos only two survived. Eight of the crew of the San Antonio had died, by July 3rd and practically all the rest were ill. But on July 9th with five ailing sailors as a crew and many sick men as passengers the San Antonio started on a tragic voyage to San Blas. Nine who began the journey never reached its end. The ship returned in March of the following year - in time to prevent the abandonment of the Mission of San Diego de Alcalá. The supplies it brought were most welcome to those who had remained in San Diego, and to Portolá and his men as well - for they had just returned from an exhausting and unsuccessful search for the port of Monterey. They had indeed found it, but failed to recognize it.

In 1770 Portolá established a military post at Monterey. San Diego became the mother of missions; and California became firmly established as the outlying province of New Spain, a bar to the encroachments of other covetous powers.

The center of life and activity was now at the new camp. The site of the old one was abandoned.

For a period of about 80 years only an occasional Indian fisherman, or hunter, or a chance passer-by broke the loneliness of this realm of the dead. The lap of the waves, the flap of the seagull's wings, the cry of the sandpiper and the sighing of the winds alone broke the reigning silence.

One exception, however, occurred in 1782 when the Pantoja Expedition surveyed and mapped the harbor. Some of the sailors of this expedition succumbed to their age old enemy, scurvy, and, since their ships were anchored near this point, they were buried there. Pantoja drew a map of the harbor indicating thereon the location of Punta de los Muertos.

The land slept. The crosses rotted and disappeared. Wind and wave erased the last trace of this "Seamen's Rest." Some time after 1850 William Heath Davis says of himself:²⁴ "Of the new town of San Diego, now the city of San Diego, I can say that I was its founder ... several sailors and marines died and interred on a sandspit adjacent to where my wharf stood and was named as above," that is, La Punta de los Muertos. The land awoke. New Town or San Diego was founded.

24. W. H. Davis, Seventy-five years in California, 334.

It grew and spread beyond all expectation. The dead were forgotten in the rush and rumble of faster moving times.

Factories, churches, and schools, the earmarks of a modern city, were built. Historians and students became interested in the romantic story of the past. Students queried, "What is the origin of the name Punta de los Muertos?" Some answered: "Because of the burial there of a large number of scurvy stricken members of the Expedition of 1769." Others declared: "It was so named because of the burial there of the sailors who died of scurvy, but who belonged to Pantoja's Expedition of 1782.

Thus a great discussion arose and writers are ranged on opposite sides. This monograph is written on the basis of the conclusion that this place is so called because of the burial here of the persons who died of scurvy (and perhaps other causes) from the Expedition of 1769. However, the reasons of writers on opposite sides of the controversy will be given.

Of course the location of the first landing place and the original camp site is the crux of this problem. Where did they bury their dead on that Wednesday, May 3, 1769?

Miss Winifred Davidson says:

There is some doubt about the place where stood the 1769 'pest

25. Davidson, Where California began, 15, 64, 153.

house' - mere rude barracks made of canvas which were erected 'on a hillock close by the beach and a cannon shot from the packets.' Smythe thinks that 'la Punta de los Muertos' (Dead Men's Point) was at the foot of H Street in what is now the city of San Diego; but Father Engelhardt says: 'We do not think that the Spaniards who preferred to have the cemeteries near the church, would have buried the dead so far away.' Father Engelhardt was probably correct in his surmise. We have to remember that there were scarcely enough men aboard the two packets to work them; and Captains Perez and Vila would not have added cruelty to an apparent necessity - which consisted of approaching as near as possible the mouth of the San Diego River, where fresh water and green foods could be procured - would not have forced that sick and dying company to drive the ships a league and a half beyond the river's mouth! Somewhere near the present United States Naval Training Station, or possibly nearer the Marine Base, may be taken as the landing place when ... 'at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, Wednesday 3, several soldiers with Fr. Fernando Parron, Don Pedro Parron, Don Pedro Fages, and Don Jorge Estorace went off in the launch to bury the dead seamen ashore.'

The sword tip that is Ballast Point (or Pt. Guijarros) and the crescent that was old La Playa - a mile away - are however, both Point Loma Beaches.... 'Of about ninety sailors, soldiers and mechanics less than thirty survived.' Sixty little white crosses were added to those already bleaching in the blessed ground under the crest: in old La Playa.

Considering these two statements we must conclude that Miss Davidson placed the burial ground about a mile

from Ballast Point, on the west side of the bay.

In a manuscript dealing with La Punta de los Muertos Miss Davidson, after a lengthy discussion, and after giving the reasons of several investigators has the following to say: 26

Three historic events occurred at or near the foot of Market Street, San Diego:

(1) Men of the Spanish frigates 'La Princesa' and 'La Favorita,' commanded by Captain Augustin de Echeverra, engaged in charting San Diego Bay in the year 1782, died and were buried here.

(2) William Heath Davis, Don Jose Antonio Aguirre, Don Miguel de Pedrorena and others, attempted in 1850 to found San Diego (New Town) here.

(3) In July, 1905, men and boys of the U.S.S. Bennington lost their lives in an explosion which occurred near here.

La Punta de los Muertos is therefore a name appropriate to the site - a name applied for the first time in all probability in 1782, by Juan Pantoja y Arriaga and with reference to his lost mates.

27

This view is held also by Mr. William Heath Davis:

... 'Punta de los Muertos' (Point of the Dead), from the circumstance that in the year 1787 ^{the old diaries} quoted, say 1782, a Spanish squadron anchored within a stone's throw of the present site of the city of San Diego. During the stay of the fleet, surveying the bay of San Diego for the first time,

26. Davidson, In regard to the bronze plaque Puntos de los Muertos.

27. Davis, Seventy-five years in California, 334.

several sailors and mariners died and were interred on a sandspit, adjacent to where my wharf stood and was named as above.

While these and other writers contend that the name La Punta de los Muertos was first applied by Pantoja in memory of his dead shipmates in 1782, there are many who do not subscribe to this theory.

An examination of some of the original diaries and letters by Vila, Constanso, Crespi, Serra and others may help us to arrive at another conclusion.

Constanso, the geographer of the Expedition of 1769, ²⁸ says: "Close to the beach, on the east side of the port, a small enclosure was built with a parapet of earth and brushwood, and mounted with two cannon."

It could not, therefore, have been at La Playa or at the location of U. S. Naval Training Station or Marine Base as they are on the west side of the bay. At most, this is only a mile and a half from Presidio Hill while Dead Men's Point is three miles from Old Town or the San Diego River ²⁹ where they obtained drinking water.

The camp site was in the immediate vicinity of

28. Constanso, "Narrative of the Portola Expedition," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, I, 32.

29. Federal writers' project. San Diego, a California city, 38.

the place where the first dead were buried on May 5, 1769.

30
 Father Crespi says: "The fathers told us that nine of the crew of the San Carlos had already died of it, two on the way were cast into the sea, and seven who were buried on the shore where the camp was established."

31
 Captain Vila says: "They had decided to build shelters for the sick on a hillock close to the beach and a cannon shot from the packets...."

Now let us take the Vila diary and try to follow his movements and determine his anchorages. It reads: 32

Sunday April 30 to Monday, May 1:
 At 5 o'clock in the morning I succeeded in anchoring under the shelter of Point Guijarros, alongside the San Antonio ... I gave orders to her captain to enter the inner harbor in order to be nearer shore, as I myself was planning to do....

From Monday 1, to Tuesday May 2....
 At 5 o'clock in the morning (Tuesday) I weighed anchor ... I took advantage of the rising tide to penetrate farther into the harbor.

At half-past seven, I anchored in seven fathoms. Muddy black sand. Tide was already running out.

From Tuesday, 2 to Wednesday, May 3.... Accordingly I weighed anchor,

30. Bolton, Fray Juan Crespi, Missionary explorer of the Pacific Coast.

31. "Vicente Vila's diary," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II, 101.

32. Ibid., 93-99.

and,... I stood inside in order to approach the river or watering place as nearly as possible.

At half-past four in the afternoon after reconnoitering and finding that the harbor extended inland toward the SE more than four leagues, and that the watering place still lay on my port quarter with no channel to approach it on account of the keys and sand banks extending seaward, I ... ordered soundings taken of the bank lying toward the watering place, in order to see if there were any channel, but none was found.

Now Vila has come from Point Guijarros into the harbor and has found that the harbor extended about four leagues to the southeast. At this time his ship's prow must have been pointing east or southeast. On account of the sand he could not approach close to the mouth of the river. Probably he was still quite a distance from the east shore of the bay with the sand banks and the islands on his left, or port side.

To continue the diary:

From Wednesday 3, to Thursday May 4.... At eleven o'clock in the morning the San Antonio weighed anchor and as she passed alongside her captain shouted that he was going to tie up as near the watering place as possible as we had agreed. At two o'clock she anchored a full gunshot from the beach....

At ten o'clock in the morning I anchored astern the San Antonio at a distance a full cable's length in two fathoms of water.

Here they were anchored at last as near the river mouth as they could get on account of sand. ³³ The San Antonio was a "full gunshot from the beach" and they were a cannon shot from the point where they established the camp and buried their dead, on the east side of the ³⁴ bay.

If the reader will now examine the map made by Pantoja in 1782, he will readily see how far down the harbor toward La Punta de los Muertos or the foot of Market Street the sand extended. Note the 2 fathom line above here less than 2 fathoms. Much of this has since been

-
33. "Pantoja's map of 1782," California Historical Society Quarterly, IX, 3, Plate 1; Alvena Suhl, Historical geography of San Diego, Fig. 6; H.H. Bancroft, History of California, II, 550; Wm. E. Smythe, History of San Diego, 693-696; Francis F. Farquhar, "The topographical reports of Lieutenant George H. Derby," California Historical Society Quarterly, II, 67.

Both Smythe and Derby state that the river flowed into False Bay (now Mission Bay) in the early part of the 19th century, Derby states that it did so until 1811, while Smythe contends that it was 1821 when it first broke into San Diego Bay. Both these views are clearly at variance with Vila and others, who spoke of the approach of the San Carlos and San Antonio, to the river's mouth and of the entry of the ship's launch into the river at high tide. Previous to the construction of Derby Dam the river had fluctuated between False and San Diego bays, but it certainly was flowing into San Diego Bay in 1769, and had already made large deposits of mud and sand in the harbor, The dates of its breaking into False Bay and of its subsequent return to the harbor are uncertain.

34. Constanso, "Narrative of the Portola Expedition," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, I, 33; "Vicente Vila's diary," II, 101.

35
 dredged out. If they hugged the shore (and they were only a gunshot away - a short distance those days) they could not possibly have been far from La Punta de los Muertos (a cannon shot away according to Vila's diary). They started out from Point Guijarros and had spent four solid days maneuvering. If they anchored off old La Playa as Miss Davidson says, they were within a mile of their starting point - on the west side of the harbor instead of the east.

At this point the words of Mr. H. C. Hopkins are illuminating:
 36

The party from the San Carlos and the San Antonio had landed at Dead Men's Point about where the foot of Market Street now is. Some historians assert that this camp was at Old Town, but careful investigation shows that not a fact. The instructions tell us that the camp had to be within gunshot of the ship anchored in the bay. The water about Old Town is too shallow for such anchorage, and for that reason the hospital camp was established on a point near deep water. Positive proof of this fact is shown from Fr. Crespi's letter. 'When we reached this port since there was no fresh water near, we went back about a league, still in sight of it, where.

-
35. "Pantoja's map of 1782," California Historical Society Quarterly, IX, 3, Plate 1.
 36. Hopkins, History of San Diego, its pueblo lands and water, 32.

the fathers who arrived the first of the month had already investigated. We found there a good sized river which empties into the sea.' Miss Winifred Davidson, an authority on the history of Point Loma, believes the camp to have been at La Playa.

For the sake of seeing the merits of the case clearly, just suppose La Punta de los Muertos to have been the landing place and see how this conclusion harmonizes with Father Crespi's words quoted above and the quotation given below:

37

Constanso says: "The officers resolved to move the camp close to the river, which had not been done before because it had not been deemed advisable to divide so small a force.... All moved to the new camp which was transferred one league further north on the right bank of the river, on a hill of moderate height.... "

Further proof, if any is needed, that the landing place was not at La Playa, is found in Father Crespi's diary: ³⁸ "The entrance to the port is ... thirty-two degrees and thirty-four minutes. The point where the mission was to be established, about three leagues further north,..." Now old La Playa was only about a mile from Point Guijarros, which guarded the entrance to the harbor. But the mission

-
37. Constanso, "Narrative of the Portola Expedition," Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, I, 35.
 38. Bolton, Fray Juan Crespi, missionary explorer of the Pacific Coast, 118.

was about three leagues away. La Playa was therefore, three leagues from the mission, less the distance to Pt. Guijarros - a mile or possibly two - which made it at least two leagues distant. However, as we have just seen, the mission was about a league north of the first camp site; it surely was not at old La Playa. Nor could they approach the mouth of the river very much closer from that direction because of sand.

It should be said here that the term league cannot be considered a definite measure in terms of miles or any other linear unit. ³⁹ While the measure itself was definite, the method of measuring a given distance between two points varied, thus making the number of leagues or miles when translated into current English variable. The Spaniards did not actually measure the distance they traversed; they estimated it. This depended to some extent on the stature of the man who stepped off the leagues. If he were a tall man, his steps being long, and counting so many steps to a league, he would of course estimate fewer leagues between two given points than a short man who must take more steps to cover the same distance and thus compute a greater number of leagues. Another method was to go by the time, it took the pack horses

39. Webster's New International dictionary, a measure of distance varying from about 2.4 to 4.6 miles.... The old Spanish league (legua) of 4.23 km. (2.63 miles) is used in the Philippines, Mexico, Texas....

to travel a given distance. By knowing the average rate of travel per hour it was easy to know approximately how many leagues was traveled in a given lapse of time.

This is shown by the following quotation from
40 Anza: "In conclusion, because it appears to me it ought to be noticed here, I say that in approximating the leagues traveled, I have estimated them according to the number of hours rated by pack animals."

Thus when the early writers said the camp was moved back about a league they may have meant a distance anywhere from two and a half to four and a half miles. The location of the new camp at Presidio Hill falls within these limits, starting from La Punta de los Muertos, the place of the first camp.

The contention that this point acquired its name through the burial there of seamen of Pantoja's Expedition of 1782 is secondary. Over sixty people of the Expedition of 1769 were buried somewhere on San Diego Bay. As has been shown, the first camp was where they buried the dead seamen, and that was on the east side of the bay. Gray's map of 1850 shows they had to anchor near a point at the foot of Market Street in order to find deep water near the shore, and at the same time be as near as possible to the

40. A. B. Thomas, Forgotten frontiers, 205.

41

mouth of the river. This should prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the dead were buried in that immediate vicinity. No one had named it, yet Father Serra had consecrated it. It was a place burned into their memory by the fire of affliction and the bereavement of death. No place was so prominent in their thoughts. They must have spoken of it often. When they referred to it they had to call it something - yet it had no name. It was just a point of land. What point? The Point of the Dead or Dead Men's Point. It was a people's name. Probably no one will ever know just who first called it that. But the phrase was apt and the name stuck. In 1769 an imperfect map had been drawn on incomplete knowledge. Pantoja in 1782, doubtless was the first to print this name on a map.⁴² He anchored his ships off Punta de los Muertos for the same reason that Vila did, probably; because, after he passed the "little harbor behind Point Guijarros," this was the first place he could find deep water near the shore.⁴³ He buried his seamen here because it was already a consecrated burial ground, dotted with crosses, and also of course, because it lay just opposite his ships. He was commissioned to

41. Suhl, Historical geography of San Diego, Fig. 11.

42. Ibid, Fig. 5

43. "Pantoja's map of 1782," and California Historical Society Quarterly, IX, 3 and 6. "Gray's map of 1850."

survey and map the harbor. His business was to draw a map and record the names of places and points as he found them in use then. For thirteen years people had been calling this Dead Men's Point, so of course he wrote La Punta de los Muertos on the map. No doubt he did have in mind the memory of his dead mates also. At best it was only an additional or secondary reason, the primary one being that Punta de los Muertos was already a firmly established name.

Many writers have come to this conclusion. Some of them are quoted below. Mr. A. B. Gray, chief surveyor and engineer of the United States and head of the United States Mexican Boundary Commission (1850) is quoted as follows:

"The Spanish fleet anchored seven miles above the entrance and at a point where the channel lies near the shore, which they named Punta de los Muertos (Point of the Dead) from burying a number of the crew there, who had died from scurvy contracted during the voyage."⁴⁴

Mr. Smythe agrees thus:⁴⁵

The temporary pesthouse or hospital erected for the accommodation of the sick sailors stood at what is now the foot of H Street. It was a rude affair made of canvas. A third of those who had come on the San Carlos died before the ravages of the scurvy

44. Smythe, History of San Diego, II, 690.

45. Ibid., I, 42.

were stayed. They were buried there, and henceforth the place was known on the Spanish charts of the harbor as Punta de los Muertos or Dead Men's Point.

46

Mr. Hopkins adds:

On July 2nd, 1769, the next day after his arrival, he (Serra) performed the solemn ceremony of giving Christian burial to 31 of the original 222 who had composed the four parties which arrived.

These men were buried near the end of the present wharf where the street car now turns off Market Street to go to the ferry landing. The place has since been known as Dead Men's Point. Singular as it is, for many years, adjoining these grounds has stood a room called Seamen's Rest, now called Naval Men's Building.

47

Further Miss Suhl says:

The crews had suffered severely from scurvy and it was necessary to erect some kind of a hospital to take care of them. A camp was established on the east side of the port on the bay flat at the foot of what is now Market Street. Those who died were probably buried here and hence the name Dead Men's Point.

Mr. Atherton, in his thesis corroborates as follows:

"A third of the San Carlos party died before the ravages of scurvy were curbed. The dead were buried on a point known as Punta de los Muertos" and adds in a footnote: "This point is

46. Hopkins, History of San Diego, its pueblo lands and water, 36.

47. Suhl, Historical geography of San Diego, 27, Fig. 11.

located at the foot of Market Street."⁴⁸

Dr. Lyman contributes the following: "So tragic was this initial baptism of California shores that 'Punta de los Muertos' or Dead Men's Point near New Town (San Diego) derived its name from the burial of their scurvy and dysentery stricken soldiers and sailors...." ⁴⁹ Showing that he, too, thinks the 1769 expedition contributed the dead from whom the point is named.

50

Bancroft quotes:

Judge Hayes, Emig Notes, M.S., 474, thinks that the vessels were anchored off what is now New Town between the two wharves, and that Punta de los Muertos or Dead Men's Point, derived its name from the burial of the scurvy stricken sailors. And such is probably the fact for the name appears on Pantoja's chart of 1784 in Sutil y Mexicana Viages, Atlas #5. See also Bancroft's Pers. Obs. M.S., 14.

Lastly, Judge Benjamin Hayes, jurist and historian who was mentioned by Bancroft in the preceding paragraph, says: "On the first day of May, both the San Carlos and the San Antonio were safely anchored in the Bay in front of the present site of New San Diego, - by them and ever since designated 'Punta de los Muertos,' from the burial

48. Lucien C. Atherton, The early history of the San Diego presidential district, 38.

49. Dr. George D. Lyman, "The beginnings of California medical history," California and Western medicine, May 1925.

50. Bancroft, History of California, I, 130, note 9.

there, says tradition of a number of sailors dying of scurvy." ⁵¹

To reach this historic spot, where brave and noble men laid the foundation of the great state of California, take U. S. Highway #101 from Los Angeles. As you approach San Diego you will see on your right, Mission Bay, once called False Bay. Continuing southward you cross the San Diego River which once flowed into San Diego Bay, but was turned into Mission Bay in 1853 by the construction of Derby Dike. Just after you cross the river, to your left, is Presidio Hill Park, the site of the original presidio and Mission San Diego de Alcalá the first mission established in California. Following Pacific Highway #101 you will pass on the left Old Town Plaza around which so many interesting old adobes clustered, and where so many historic events had their inception. Farther on to the right you pass Lindberg Field from which the flying Colonel and the Spirit of St. Louis soared to fame. As you proceed, you cross Date Street and still looking to your right toward the bay, you will observe Civic Center. Go on across Broadway till you come to the ferry building and wharf at the foot of Market Street.

On the afternoon of March 6, 1932, a bronze

51. B. I. Hayes, Emigrant notes, 474.

marker was dedicated at Punta de los Muertos to honor the Spanish seamen buried there. The formal ceremony was conducted by the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West. "The speakers, Grand President Carlson, Grand Trustee Florence Schoneman and N.S.G.W. Deputy Grand President Edward H. Dowell were introduced by Dr. Louise C. Heilbron. The plaque, presented by Sadie Winn-Brainard of Sacramento, was accepted by President R. Miller."⁵² This site was officially accepted and registered by the California State Chamber of Commerce as a State Historic Landmark on December 6, 1932.

As you gaze out across the Bay of San Diego a scene of beauty will greet your eyes such as those valiant pioneers could never have imagined. The twinkling lights of Loma's long guarding arm, and of Coronado are a sight their eyes never saw. The star-studded heavens and the myriad lights of earth blend in a glorious spectacle. For them, all was dark save for the fitful blaze of a campfire or the weak rays of a lantern. Of humming factory wheels, stately ships, and the varied life of a modern city, these first pioneers never knew. May they lie content in their eternal Seamen's Rest!

52. Grizzly Bear, 11. April 1932.

AUTHORITIES

I. Periodicals:

1. Constanso, Miguel. "The Portola expedition of 1769-1770," ed. by Frederick John Teggart, Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, I. Berkeley, 1910.
2. La Punta de los Muertos, Grizzly Bear. San Francisco, April 1932.
3. Lyman, Dr. George D. "The beginnings of California medical history," California and Western medicine. San Francisco, May 1925.
4. Vila, Vicente. "The diary of Vicente Vila," ed. by Robert Selden Rose. Academy of Pacific Coast History Publications, II. Berkeley, 1911.

II. General Works:

5. Bancroft, Hubert Howe. History of California. 7v. San Francisco, 1884-1890.
6. Bolton, Herbert Eugene, ed. Fray Juan Crespi, missionary explorer of the Pacific Coast, 1769-1774. Berkeley, 1927.
7. Chapman, Charles Edward. The founding of Spanish California, the northwestward expansion of New Spain, 1687-1783. New York, 1916.
8. Clinch, Bryan James. California and its missions; their history to the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. 2v. San Francisco, 1904.
9. Davidson, Winifred. Where California began. San Diego, 1929.

10. Davis, William Heath. Seventy-five years in California, 1831-1906..., a reissue and enlarged illustrated edition of "Sixty years in California." San Francisco, 1929.
11. Denis, Alberta Johnston. Spanish Alta California. New York, 1927.
12. Eldredge, Zoeth Skinner, ed. History of California. 5v. New York, 1915.
13. Drury, Aubrey. California: an intimate guide. New York and London, 1935.
14. Federal writers' project. California, a guide to the Golden State. American guide series. New York, 1939.
15. Federal writers' project. San Diego, a California city. San Diego, 1937.
16. Fitch, Abigail Hetzel. Junipero Serra; the man and his work. Chicago, 1914.
17. Hopkins, Harry C . San Diego, its pueblo lands and water. San Diego, 1929.
18. Jackson, Helen Hunt. Glimpses of California and the missions. Boston, 1902.
19. Rensch, Hero Eugene, and Rensch, Ethel Grace. Historic spots in California; the southern counties. Stanford University, California, and London, 1932.
20. Smythe, William Ellsworth. History of San Diego, 1542-1907; an account of the rise and progress of the pioneer settlement on the Pacific Coast of the United States. San Diego, 1907.
21. Thomas, Alfred Barnbary. Forgotten frontiers. Oklahoma University, 1932.

III. Manuscripts:

22. Atherton, Lucien C . The early history of the San Diego presidial district, 1542-1782. M.A. thesis. University of California, Berkeley, 1930.

23. Barnes, Esther. The San Carlos, the Mayflower of the Pacific. M.A. thesis. University of California, Berkeley, 1935.
24. Davidson, Winifred. La Punta de los Muertos. San Diego, 1932. (Bancroft Library).
25. Hayes, Judge Benjamin Ignatius. Emigrant notes. Mss. Bancroft Library.
26. Suhl, Alvena Marie. Historical Geography of San Diego. M.A. thesis. University of California, Berkeley, 1927.

IV. Maps.

27. "Pantoja's map of 1782," and "Gray's map of 1850," California Historical Society Quarterly, IX, 3, 6. San Francisco, 1930.