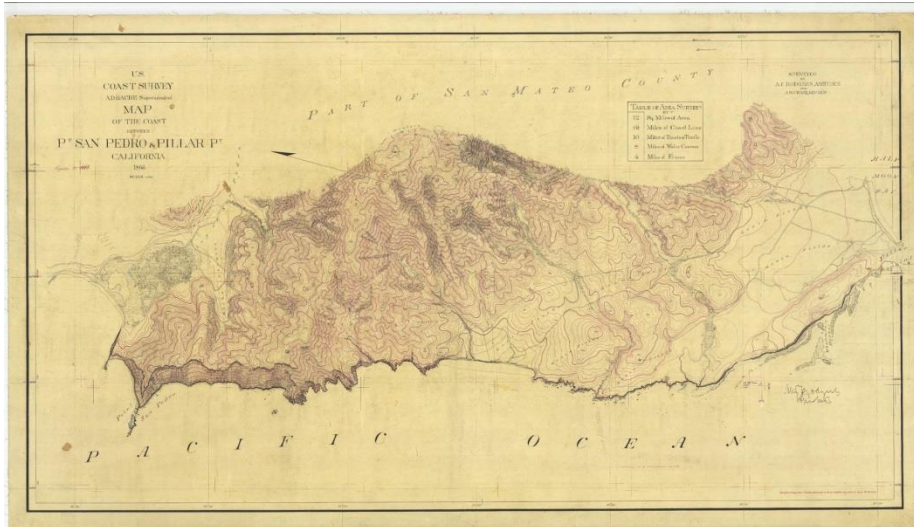


OHLONE-PORTOLÁ HERITAGE TRAIL ~ A JOURNEY OF MANY STORIES Recognizing Pacifica's Role

By JEAN BARTLETT | THE WEEK OF 8-13-18-8-19-18



Copy of 1866 U.S. Coast Survey Map which is being used to help route the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail for the 2019, 250th commemoration of the Portolá expedition.

In early November, 1769, Spanish explorer Captain Gaspar de Portolá, and the men of his expedition, stood on the summit of what is now known as Pacifica's Sweeney Ridge and looked out to a great body of water. "It is a harbor such that not only the navy of our most Catholic Majesty but those of all Europe could take shelter in it," wrote one of the expedition's diarists, Franciscan missionary Fray Juan Crespi. This "harbor" was the San Francisco Bay.

In recognition of the 250th commemoration of the Portolá expedition coming up in 2019, a committee of county, state, federal and tribal representatives is currently at work on the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail Project. Pacificans involved in the committee planning are: Pacifica Historical Society members Rick Della Santina and Pat Kremer, trail specialist and Open Space and Parkland Advisory Committee member Jim Sullivan, Pacifica City Councilmember Sue Digre and PB&R Director Mike Perez.

The goal is to design and interpret the path that Gaspar de Portolá took during his expedition of the San Mateo County Coast and the San Francisco Bay. The County of San Mateo Park Department writes on their website that this work includes: "telling the history of the Ohlone people who lived in the area and who were instrumental in supporting the Portolá expedition in 1769." When completed, it is estimated that the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail of San Mateo County will be 90 miles.

The original objective of the Portolá expedition was to find the harbor of Monterey by sea and by land. The harbor had been previously sighted by Spanish explorer Sebastián Vizcaino in 1602.

"The Spanish had been sailing the Pacific on their 'Manila' trade," Pat Kremer said.

These "Manila Galleons" mostly carried Chinese goods shipped from Manila, and the trade began before the Vizcaino sighting and continued long after.

"Following the Vizcaino sighting, the Spanish claimed Alta (Upper) California as their property, but they had neglected to actually put 'boots on the ground' in Alta CA," Kremer noted. "By the mid-1700s, the Spanish were worried about the ambitions of both the English and Russians on the West Coast of North America.

"King Charles III of Spain ordered Portolá to lead an expedition to found presidios and Missions at both San Diego and Monterey Bays, to establish the Spanish presence," Kremer continued. "The idea was that they would convert California's Native Americans to Christianity, then the natives would be their Christian 'colonists' for Spain in Alta CA. The Franciscan Monks sincerely believed they were saving souls in converting the natives to Christianity. But the plan was not realistic as the natives mostly died when brought to the missions as inhabitants." (California's Native Americans had no immunity against smallpox and other European diseases).

"In addition," Kremer went on to say, "those who lived did not like the lifestyle the Spanish demanded of them – essentially slave-like labor. Basically, the 'game plan' was abandoned by the time the Anza Expedition came to San Francisco in 1776."

In September of 1769, the Portolá land expedition actually looked out over Monterey Bay but didn't realize it as it did not match the description of Vizcaino's notes, "A fine safe harbor from all winds." What they saw was a completely unprotected beach below them, not a port for ships. The men of the expedition proceeded northward. And all along the way, the Spanish utilized the life-saving assistance and trails of the land's residents and caretakers, the Ohlones. The Costanoan/Ohlone tribes between Monterey and the San Francisco Bay date back 10,000 years.



From the Ohlone-Portolá permanent exhibit at the Pacifica Coastside Museum.



Carved portrait of Gaspar de Portolá.

On November 4, 1769, Portolá and his men quite unexpectedly discovered the San Francisco Bay from Sweeney Ridge. In November of 1983, this discovery site received a granite monument, donated by the Portolá Expedition Association, commemorating Pacifican Carl Patrick McCarthy's efforts for the preservation of Sweeney Ridge.

"In memory of Carl Patrick McCarthy whose dedicated efforts for national recognition of the Portolá expedition's discovery of San Francisco Bay in 1769 included personally bringing 11,863 visitors to this Discovery Site and presenting the expedition's history in pictures to 9,345 between 1966 and his death October 15, 1981.

Kremer is Carl and Grace McCarthy's daughter. Both of her late parents were passionate civic-minded Pacificans, and both were recognized in the Congressional Record by the late Congressman Tom Lantos. Her mom, among many contributions, served three times as Pacifica's mayor.

Kremer serves on the Pacifica Historical Society Board, and she is the PHS worker bee behind the Portolá permanent exhibit at the Pacifica Coastside Museum at the Little Brown Church. She has been presenting "the Portolá slide show" – which was digitized and modified by both Pat and her husband Jim Kremer – and publicizing the annual "Discovery Day" hike for the past several years. She is also: participating in the overall planning for the Pacifica portion of the Ohlone-Portolá trail, and participating in the planning for the Pacifica events that will take place throughout the year leading up to the commemoration. With all the work her father did to create the Discovery Site, she noted that up until he embarked on the project, he did not previously have any particular passion for history.



"I think he was fundamentally inspired because something of such historical significance happened within the borders of Pacifica City limits," Kremer said. "He was a real promoter for Pacifica – recall 'scenic Pacifica' was his brainchild – and the Portolá story was something that could help put Pacifica 'on the map.' Once he decided to focus on this topic, it just grew and grew for him: he created the slide show which he showed to innumerable clubs and organizations around the Bay Area; he did the commemorative hikes, the first Saturday of November; he was behind the effort to get the site federally recognized and to have that recognition include the purchase of some land; he made various postcards; he recruited Judge Jose deLarios to narrate his slideshow (on tape) and make a film strip in English and Spanish for schools. My dad was fearless and tireless about contacting the people he needed to talk to, to get information from or convince to help him. He was also retired which gave him the time he needed to get these things done and he succeeded. The site is a National Historic Landmark.

(Jean Bartlett photo.) Pacifica Historical Society volunteers Suzanne Lamar, Pat Kremer and Jerry Crow lineup the Portolá exhibit, two weeks prior to the August 22, 2015 Gala Opening of the Pacifica Coastside Museum at the Little Brown Church.

On Thursday, November 1, 2018, the Pacifica Historical Society is going to have a kick-off for the upcoming 2019 event. For this event, held at the Coastside Museum, Kremer will be adding several new panels to the Portolá

display. One panel will present her father's role in having the site recognized. A second and possibly third panel will present what happened 50 years ago in Pacifica, when the 200th year of the expedition was celebrated. It was a huge deal and Pacificans – including Kremer's parents as well as Bill Drake, editor, publisher and owner of the Pacifica Tribune – leapt in with a huge spirit of community volunteerism to shine a light on Pacifica for all to see.

Kremer hopes the news of the upcoming historic event will inspire Pacificans to rise up, like they did 50 years ago, in a volunteer spirit that will shine a light on our fair city.

Grace McCarthy, who wrote a column in Bill Drake's Pacifica Tribune – "Space for Grace" – remembered California's 1769-1969 Bicentennial in her August 21, 1996 write-up. She wrote, "The celebration recognized the founding of San Diego, the founding of Monterey, the founding of the Missions, and the Discovery of San Francisco Bay (and recognized) the latter was from Sweeney Ridge within Pacifica."



In early 1970, right after the Bicentennial, Grace was asked to look into Pacifica having a Sister City that had something to do with Portolá. She got on it and on April 27, 1970, Pacifica's City Council passed a Resolution suggesting Balaguer, Province of Lleida, Catalonia, Spain, for the Sister City relationship. Balaguer is located in the foothills of the Pyrenees and is Portolá's hometown. City Council followed this up with a presentation to the Consul General of Spain in San Francisco. The Consul General approved the Sister City Resolution and it was accepted by Balaguer on October 10, 1970.

← (As California Congressman Tom Lantos looked on, Pacifican Gil Ricarte presented a historic re-enactment of Captain Gaspar de Portolá, during Pacifica's and California's proud acceptance of Catalonia's 1988 gift, a gift which honored the Spanish explorer's discovery of the San Francisco Bay. The beloved Ricarte remained a dedicated and deeply studied re-enactor of Portolá, until his death in August of 2018.)



(Jean Bartlett photo.) **The statue of Portola looks up to the Discovery Site of Pacifica's Sweeney Ridge.**

In 1988, Catalonia gave the State of California a 9-foot statue of Portolá. It is the work of the legendary Catalan sculptor Josep Maria Subirachs and his associate, Francesc Carulla, and it was placed in the public parking lot at Crespi Drive and Highway 1 in Pacifica. This particular site is close to where the members of the Portolá expedition left the coast to climb to the ridge where they first saw San Francisco Bay. The statue faces the Discovery Site at Sweeney Ridge.

Pacificans participating in the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail Project are additionally joining with Committee partners on signage, historical markers, an automobile route and recreational route options – bicycling, hiking and equestrian.

"We can renew our connection with Balaguer, Spain," said City Councilmember Sue Digre. "This is such an important event. It's international, national, state and county history and it's Pacifica local history."

Digre has been a resident of Pacifica since 1990 and has served as Mayor of Pacifica three times. She loves her hometown. "The people, the passion of Pacificans, the scenery, the art, the music, the extraordinary volunteerism, the dedicated service and spirit of local businesses, and our history."

For years she has doggedly espoused planning for this unique 250 Commemoration of the Ohlone-Portolá Trail, and recognizes the late Pacifican Shirley Drye as a real catalyst for her involvement.

Drye was a California archaeologist, and a recognized expert on Pacifica's Ohlone people as well as plants native to this area. There is a permanent display featuring some of

Drye's finds and insights into local history at the Pacifica Coastside Museum.

"Shirley was committed to sharing Pacifica's history," Digre noted. "She would be so excited about these historical stories being told, right here in San Mateo County and beyond. I must admit, I am nearly bursting to get the word out."

Digre said she would like to see our city and our commercial entities, "Take advantage of the research on data about the Ohlone and the Portolá Discovery Site and subsequently enable the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail with 'story' apps to lure and draw national and international visitors to spend time in Pacifica and money here, and to return again and again. This is a wonderful opportunity to be highlighted in the world media."

Digre said the whole thing – working both in and beyond our Pacifica borders, working with the San Mateo County/Silicon Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, working with tribal representatives, our parks and our local governments, our local historical societies and associations, and our Pacifica Chamber of Commerce to commemorate our history in a real joining of community spirit – is a thrilling opportunity.

"Our environment is our economy," she said. "The commemoration of this event and the components that enabled this event provides us with a 21st century unfolding of living history. It provides Pacifica a unique opportunity to capitalize, utilize and embrace a very present opportunity for commercial profit, progress, economic sustainability and respect for our local natural assets. I want to see Pacifica embrace every bit of our rich history."

On September 25, 2018, in the Pacifica Community Center, 540 Crespi Drive, Pacifica, the San Mateo County Parks Department and the City of Pacifica are inviting the public to attend a Public Workshop on the Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail. Visit San Mateo County Parks online at <https://parks.smcgov.org/events> for details.



Pacifican and photographer Sharron L. Walker shares the view from Sweeney Ridge.

(© Sharron L. Walker)



A Bartlett's Biographies Headliner

Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco.