

CABRILLO

NATIONAL MONUMENT



HERE - AT POINT LOMA
HEAD - ON THE AFTERNOON
OF SEPTEMBER 28 1542

JUAN RODRIGUEZ
CABRILLO

DISTINGUISHED PORTUGUESE
NAVIGATOR

IN
THE SERVICE OF SPAIN
COMMANDING THE FLAG
SHIP SAN SALVADOR MADE
HIS FIRST ALTA CALI
FORNIA LANDFALL AND
THUS DISCOVERED WHAT
IS NOW THE STATE OF
CALIFORNIA

CABRILLO - WITH HIS COM
PANIONS - CAME ASHORE
ON POINT LOMA AT WHAT
IS NOW BALLAST POINT
IN THIS PORT "CLOSED
AND VERY GOOD" WHICH
THEY NAMED SAN MIGUEL

CABRILLO'S CARAVELS -
ASSEMBLED AT NAVIDAD
MEXICO UNDER ORDERS OF
DON ANTONIO DE MENDOZA
SAILED FROM THAT PORT
JUNE 27 1542

C A L I F O R N I A



CABRILLO

NATIONAL

MONUMENT

The Pacific coast of the present-day continental United States was first sighted here by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo's Spanish Expedition on September 28, 1542

CABRILLO National Monument commemorates the discovery of the coast of California by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo on September 28, 1542. His landfall at Point Loma, on which the national monument is located, and his entrance and landing in San Diego Bay, which he called San Miguel Bay, mark the first contact of Europeans with this part of the New World.

Significant as Cabrillo's discovery was, it represents but an incident in the explorations which had such a profound effect on the institutions and the thought of our civilization.

The voyage was one of many sea and land expeditions by means of which Spain extended its dominions in the New World and made known the continental character and general outlines of the Americas. Nevertheless, the descriptions of California and its Indian inhabitants, contained in the records of the expedition, are among the earliest written sources for the history of our country.

The story of Cabrillo's voyage is a heritage shared by both the United States and Mexico. The history of each nation records the same sea expeditions which, under the

Point Loma and San Diego Bay.



brave and courageous Cabrillo and others following him, led to the exploration of the Pacific coast.

The Cabrillo Expedition

Fifty years after Columbus' epochal voyage and discovery of the New World, the veil of history was lifted from the North American coast of present-day California and Oregon. Balboa's discovery of the South Sea, in 1513, had been followed by the exploration of the western coast of Central America. From Mexico City, Cortés' men continued to the Western Sea, and from bases there the Conqueror pushed northward by sea. The Gulf of California was explored, Lower California was discovered and, by 1539, its peninsular character had been determined. The prospect of riches in the unknown country north of Mexico, the hope of finding an interoceanic strait, and a belief in the feasibility of sailing north to Asia lured men of different nations, including Spaniards under Cabrillo, to expeditions which were to help unveil the great "Northern Mystery."

Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, a mariner of Portuguese birth, faithfully served the Spanish crown. He had gone to Mexico in 1520 with Narváez, was with Cortés in the conquest of Mexico City, joined Orozco's expedition into Oaxaca, and assisted Pedro de Alvarado in the conquest of Guatemala. In 1540, he sailed with Alvarado's fleet designed for exploration of the northwest coast. When Alvarado was killed in crushing an Indian uprising on the west coast of Mexico, Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza took charge of the fleet and assigned two vessels to Cabrillo for exploration of the coast to the north.

Two small vessels, the *San Salvador* and the *Victoria*, sailed under Cabrillo's command on June 27, 1542, from Navidad on the west coast of Mexico. Crossing the Gulf of California, they sailed along the outer coast of the peninsula and on August 20 reached *Cabo del Engaño* (Cape Deceit), then the most northerly point reached by earlier explorers. From there, they sailed slowly up the untried

course close in to land, stopping frequently to anchor for the night or to avoid adverse winds, to take on wood and water, and to interrogate the Indians.

Discovery of San Diego Bay

Three months of navigating brought the *San Salvador* and *Victoria* to the islands that are off the Mexican shore, opposite San Diego Bay. At night the seafarers saw the fires of the Indian camps on Point Loma, which tradition holds were located there. Indians who might have been on Point Loma's heights on September 28, 1542, may have seen two white blurs rising above the horizon, blurs which gradually took on the form of the bannered masts and sails of Spanish ships. The little vessels approached the *Islas de los Coronados* and Point of Rocks, passed through the extensive beds of kelp, over Gammon Shoal, into the Middle Ground, and finally sailed around Ballast Point. There, behind the high land of Point Loma, which the Spaniards had seen first from the sea, they found a "closed and very good port," which they named San Miguel. They were, in fact, in San Diego Bay.

On going ashore, apparently at Ballast Point, Cabrillo's men found that most of the Indians had fled; but those who remained shot arrows at the strangers, wounding three. On later contacts with the Indians, the Spaniards lured some of them with gifts. Signs, made by these men in response to questions, convinced the whites that the Indians knew of Spaniards to the east (probably those under Coronado) who were traveling about the land, sometimes killing the natives.

Further Exploration and Cabrillo's Death

On October 3, after riding out a storm which did no harm, the expedition left San Diego. The vessels continued northward along the California coast, sighting or stop-

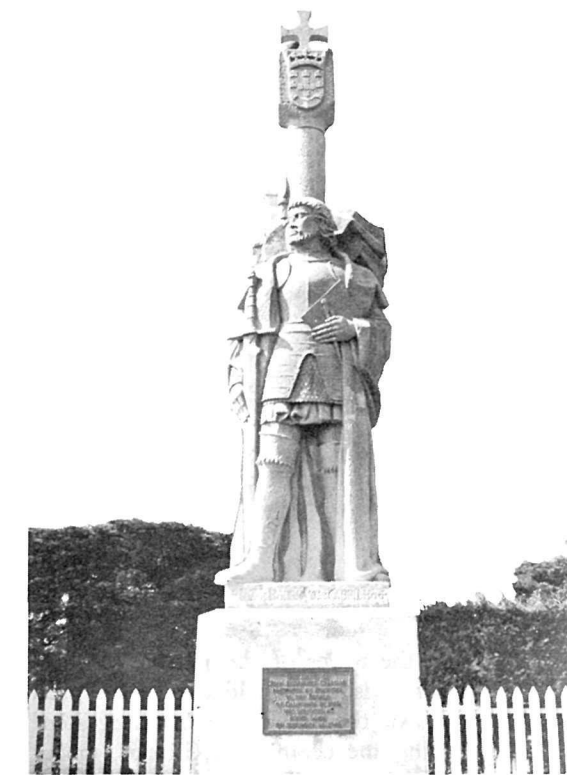
ping at several points, including Catalina and San Clemente Islands, Santa Monica Bay, San Buenaventura, and the Channel Islands. After sailing through the Santa Barbara Channel, past Point Conception and northward beyond Point Reyes, they were forced out to sea by another storm. Turning south, they returned past Drake's Bay to *Isla de la Posesión*, one of the Channel Islands, where they anchored on November 23. They renamed it *Isla de Juan Rodríguez* in honor of Cabrillo who died there on January 3, 1543, as the result of a broken arm received in October 1542. Buried on that island (presumed to be the one now known as San Miguel), his grave is unknown and unmarked.

Northernmost Limit of Expedition and Return to Navidad

Bartolomé Ferrello, or Ferrer, the chief pilot, now succeeded to the command of the men whom Cabrillo, before his death, had "strongly charged not to fail to discover as much as possible all along the coast." Ferrello continued the explorations northward until March 1, 1543, at which date he was probably beyond what is now the southern Oregon border. In the face of adverse winds and with depleted supplies the voyagers once more were driven southward by storms. The *San Salvador*, becoming separated from her sister ship, put in again at San Diego, after touching at other ports. After waiting 6 days for the *Victoria*, she sailed down the coast. There was much rejoicing on March 26 when the errant consort put in her appearance at Cedros Island. Lack of supplies precluded further exploration, and the ships proceeded to Navidad, their port of departure, which they reached on April 14, 1543.

The Monument

Cabrillo National Monument, containing about 81 acres, was established by Presidential proclamation on October 14, 1913. The



Cabrillo statue, the work of one of Portugal's distinguished sculptors—Alvaro de Bree—a gift of Portugal to California. It was dedicated on September 28, 1949, the 407th anniversary of the landfall.

principal historical structure in the area is the old San Diego Lighthouse on Point Loma. First lighted on November 15, 1855, it was one of several lighthouses authorized for the Pacific coast by Congress in 1850, shortly after American occupation of California. Some of the tiles used in its construction were taken from nearby Fort Guijarros, the site of the old Spanish fort at Ballast Point. This, together with the fact that many of the keepers of the Point Loma Lighthouse married Mexican women and reared Spanish-speaking families, gave rise to the misleading name "Old Spanish Lighthouse." The lighthouse served until 1891; but because of the height of its focal plane above sea level—462 feet—it was replaced by a new one whose light was nearer the water and could more easily be seen beneath the clouds by ships at sea.



Old Lighthouse.

From the tower of the rehabilitated old lighthouse, visitors behold one of the great seascapes of the world: An inspiring scene comprising the ocean, bays, islands, mountains, foothills, valleys, and plains which surround the city of San Diego.

Also to be seen from the light tower is Balboa Point, where Cabrillo probably landed, and where Sebastian Vizcaino, who applied the name of San Diego to the bay, is generally believed to have held Holy Mass when he visited the bay in November 1602. On this spit of land extending from Point Loma into San Diego Bay was also situated Fort Guijarros, a coastal defense of Spanish and Mexican California. Today the site is occupied by part of Fort Rosecrans Military Reservation.

About Your Visit

Cabrillo National Monument is near the southern tip of Point Loma, that arm of land forming the west side of San Diego Bay. It is 10 miles from downtown San Diego, and can be reached by following Pacific Boulevard (U.S. 101) to the highway junction at the U.S. Marine Corps Base, from which a well-marked road leads to the monument.

The area is open from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Since the monument is within a military reservation, all visitors must be out of the reservation by 6 p.m.

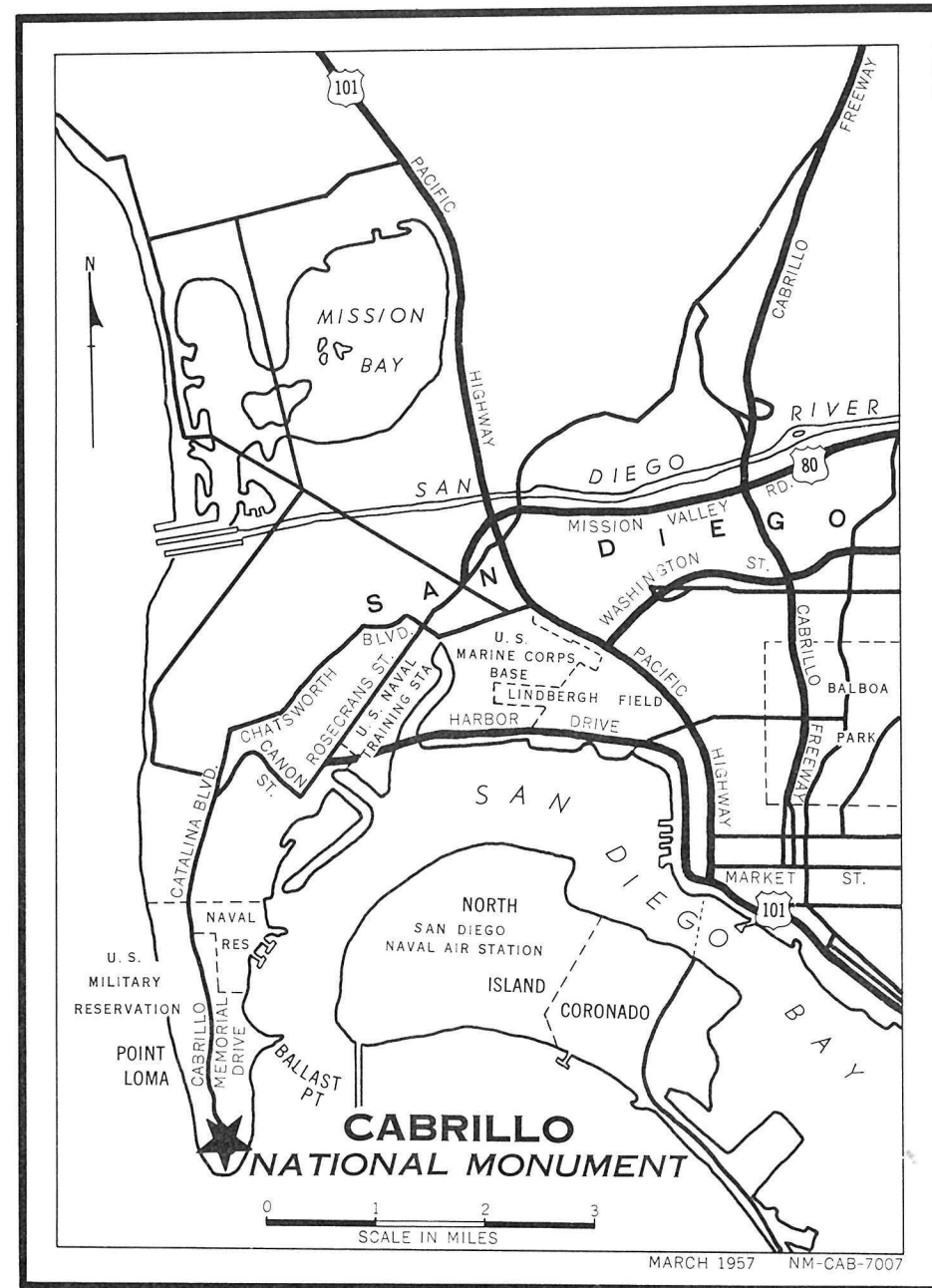
Administration

Cabrillo National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 6175, San Diego 6, Calif., is in immediate charge.

Mission 66

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FRED A. SEATON, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, CONRAD L. WIRTH, *Director*



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(Cover) Cabrillo Memorial Plaque.

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