

When San Jose Was Young

A Series of Interesting Articles of An Historical Nature
Prepared Especially for The News by a Well Known
Author and Journalist.

NO. 63 FATHER SERRA'S LAST VISIT

Father Junipero Serra made several journeys to Santa Clara and San Jose. His last visit was in 1784, when he came with Governor Pages to consecrate the new Mission church.

At that time Father Serra was very lame. He wore the coarsest hemp sandals, and he walked all the way from Monterey to San Francisco and return when the roads were only trails, and wild animals were the most numerous inhabitants of the "vast plain of San Bernardino," as Santa Clara Valley was then called.

On their arrival, Governor PAGES and Father Serra were received with ringing bells at Santa Clara, as always happened when a royal Governor came. They stopped but for the night at the Mission. In the morning Father Serra said mass, and went on to San Francisco. That morning when Father Serra said good-bye to Father Murgula, the architect of the Mission who had tolled with the Indians to make it a beautiful place of worship, and who was looking forward to its consecration, it was the last good-bye.

The governor and Father Serra had been two days at the Mission Dolores at San Francisco when messengers arrived from Santa Clara saying that Father Murgula was near death. Immediately the governor and the great priest set out for Santa Clara, but when they arrived death had silenced the Mission bells. Grief alone spoke.

Two days before the consecration of the Mission the man who had done so much towards its completion had passed away. Already he was in his grave.

The afternoon of the arrival of Governor PAGES and Father Serra, May 15, 1784, the ceremony of blessing the new church took place. All the converts were present, several hundred of them, and many of the unredeemed Indians came for the great occasion. The troops arrived from the Presidio in their uniforms, and the colonists appeared in their brightest and bravest raiment.

Father Serra said mass and preached to the people with great fervor and eloquence. Afterward he confirmed some Indians.

During all the ceremony at which Father Serra presided never once did the people realize that he felt himself near death. Yet with every word and every movement he believed that but for the higher power his strength must have failed. When his friend Palou, who afterwards wrote his biography, wished to return to his Mission, Father Serra begged him to remain to help prepare him for death. For Father Serra death had no dread, but he wept at the thought of parting from his friend, Father Palou. He feared that this was the last time that they should be together.

To him Father Serra made a general

confession, and much of his time he passed in spiritual exercise. During the night he was always at prayer. During the day he performed services for others. With a lock he beat his bare flesh, and he extinguished a lighted candle against his own breast. He remained at Santa Clara for about three weeks.

Though Father Serra felt that death was hastening to meet him, while at Santa Clara he eagerly baptized those desiring baptism. This service for the Master always stirred in him exaltation. Dager to administer the Holy Sacrament, Father Serra even came into San Jose, visited the sick in their homes and confirmed them. Doubtless there are living here today, those whose grandparents were confirmed by Father Junipero Serra.

On the last day that Father Serra came to San Jose, limping, feeble, aged, he set out for Monterey. This was in the month of June. In August he died at his Mission. His only property was half a blanket.