HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Edited by Vernon Aubrey Neasham

SANTA MONICA BEACH STATE PARK

State Park No. 57

by

Lois Ann Woodward

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SANTA MONICA BEACH STATE PARK

Santa Monica Beach State Park is picturesquely situated at the mouth of Santa Monica Canyon stretching over almost fourteen acres of broad curving beach land edging the Pacific Ocean. It is sixteen miles from the center of Los Angeles and adjoins the city limits of Santa Monica, attractive beach resort city. Excellent surf-bathing, fishing and boating make this beach park a famous all year playground for residents of the vicinity, neighboring cities and numerous tourists. Smooth, surf pounded golden sands lie below wooded canyons, high orange colored palisades and the blue mountains of the Santa Monica range which at the north veer suddenly into the sea. A warm pleasant climate combined with its beautiful natural setting contribute to make Santa Monica a world famous seaside resort.

Following the coast the State Highway passes through Santa Monica. From San Bernardino by way of Pasadena, Glendale and Hollywood, Federal Highway No. 66 also connects with Santa Monica. Wilshire, National, Santa Monica and Pico are several of the famous boulevards which lead into Santa Monica from outlying districts.

Santa Monica Bay has an area of about 250 miles and extends out to sea for ten miles. It is more of an open

roadstead than an actual harbor, although quite well protected.[1] The discovery and exploration of the Santa Monica Bay region was made by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542. In October of that year Cabrillo in command of two small Spanish sailing vessels anchored in San Diego Bay, which he named San Miguel, and made the first exploration of the California mainland. Leaving San Diego on October 3, Cabrillo sailed slowly northward along the coast. On October 9, the vessels anchored in what the Spaniards called a large ensenada, or bight, which was probably Santa Monica Bay. Of the voyage from San Diego Bay H. H. Bancroft wrote:[2]

> Leaving San Miguel October 3, they sail three days or about eighteen leagues, along a coast of valleys and plains and smokes; with high mountains in the interior, to the islands some seven leagues from the main, which they name from their vessels San Salvador and Victoria. They land on one of the islands, after the inhabitants, timid and even hostile at first have been appeased by signs and have come off in a canoe to receive gifts. They too, tell of white men on the main. On Sunday the Spaniards go over to terra firma to a large bay which they call Bahia de los Fumos, or Fuegos, from the smoke of fires seen there. It is described as a good port with good lands, valleys, plains and groves, lying in 35°. I suppose the island visited to have been Santa Catalina, and the fort to have been San Pedro.

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1. L. L. Salvator, Los Angeles in the sunny seventies, 175-181.
2. H. H. Bancroft, History of California, I, 71.

Sailing six leagues farther on October 9, Cabrillo anchors in a large ensenada, or bight, which is doubtless Santa Monica.

No other navigator is known to have explored the California Coast again, until sixty years after Cabrillo, Sebastían Vizcaíno made a voyage up the coast in 1603. On November 10, Vizcaíno anchored in San Diego Bay, where his party remained for ten days exploring the region and refitting their vessels. On November 20, they sailed from San Diego keeping close to the shore. After about seven or eight days they stopped in a bight on the mainland, probably San Pedro Bay, but did not remain there because it was not well protected from the winds.[3] Although they sailed near the vicinity of Santa Monica they left the mainland and anchored off an island which they named for the day which was that of Santa Catalina. They also named another large island to the southwest San Clemente. At Santa Catalina they found a large native population of fishermen and traders who appeared to be fearless and very friendly. They lived in large, well constructed houses and sailed the Pacific waters in fine, well made canoes. From Santa Catalina, Vizcaíno sailed on northward keeping close to the coast.

Following Vizcaíno's voyage more than a century

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3. Bancroft, History of California, I, 99.

and a half elapsed before the Spaniards made any attempt to colonize Alta California. Spanish galleons from the Philippines sailed down the coast but there is no evidence that any of them landed or explored the California mainland. In 1769 fear that England, Russia or France might encroach upon Alta California caused Spain to dispatch an expedition to make settlements at San Diego and Monterey. The expedition made the arduous journey in two divisions, one going by land and the other by sea. On their arrival at San Diego a mission and presidio were established at Old Town. Two weeks following their arrival, a part of the expedition headed by Don Gaspár de Portolá left for Monterey on July 14, 1769. Included in the group which accompanied Portolá were Captain Fernando Rivera of Moncada, Sergeant Joseph Francisco Ortega, Lieutenant Pedro Fages, Engineer Miguel Costansó, Fray Juan Crespí, Fray Francisco Goméz, twenty-seven soldiers, six Catalan volunteers, seven muleteers, two servants and fifteen Christianized Lower California Indians. This was the first party of white men to traverse this region by land. From San Diego their route followed the coast to the seashore most of the way and was almost the same as that of the later stage road and highway between San Diego and Los Angeles. They met few natives in the south but these appeared to be quite friendly.[4]

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4. Bancroft, History of California, I, 143-145.

The route of the Portolá party took them in the vicinity of Santa Monica Beach. On July 24, they observed the islands of San Clemente and Santa Catalina. On August 2, they crossed the Rio de Porciuncula on which the City of Los Angeles later was founded and named the river for the saint whose day it was. From there they passed by the tar pits known as La Brea and a little farther on camped near some springs where they encountered friendly Indians. From there the expeditionists traveled to the beach west of Santa Monica continuing northward along the seashore.[5]

Conflicting stories are told concerning the origin of the name of Santa Monica. Although Cabrillo anchored in the bay in 1542, he did not name it, and it remained unnamed until 1769. According to one account Santa Monica received its name when some Spanish soldiers made the discovery of two springs of water near Sawtelle. The waters were so crystalline that they called them "the tears of Santa Monica" in reference to the grief of Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine, over her son's lack of faith in his youth. These syrings remained until recent years.[6]

In a History of the Santa Monica Bay Region, Charles S. Warren gives this story and also another version

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5. H. E. Rensch, Historic spots in California, the southern counties, 36.
6. F. T. Cooper, Rider's California, 494.

in which he relates:[7]

> The diary of Father Juan Crespí, a missionary explorer on the Pacific Coast, from 1769 to 1774, together with Father Junipero Serra, tells of coming to a point near the coast, May 4, 1769, where they found several pools of fresh water. We called it the pools of Santa Monica are the words he recorded; May 4, is Santa Monica's day in the saints' calendar accounting in part, at least, for the readiness with which the name occurred to him.

When the explorers came to the bay of Monterey they failed to recognize the territory from the description given them by the early navigator Cabrero Bueno, which was their chief source for identification of the harbor. Continuing northward in search of the bay, they proceeded as far as San Francisco and made the first discovery of that port. After their failure to locate Monterey, in December, Portolá began the return march to San Diego April 17, 1769. The party followed much the same route as before, keeping close to the coast and passing not far from the vicinity of Santa Monica and in sight of the islands of Santa Catalina and San Clemente which by now were familiar land marks to them. Continuing northward they arrived May 24.[8]

A site for a presidio and mission were selected.

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7. C. S. Warren, History of the Santa Monica bay region, 15-16.
8. T. L. Ford, Dawn and the dons, 41-50.

San Carlos Borromeo at Monterey, was the second mission to be established in California. Thereafter this trail between San Diego and Monterey knew the frequent tread of missionary friars, Spanish colonists and Indian neophytes. It became known as El Camino Real, and with the establishment of other missions eventually extended from San Diego to Sonoma.

Two years following the establishment of the first two missions at San Diego and Monterey, Misión San Gabriel Arcángel, fourth of the Franciscan missions was established on September 8, 1771. The original location of this mission was about forty leagues north of San Diego overlooking the Rio Hondo, known then as the San Gabriel. It was situated on the direct overland route from Mexico to Monterey, the first stop-over after the desert and mountains were crossed.

The Indians in the vicinity of San Gabriel Mission were generally known as San Gabrielinos, more often merely as Gabrielinos, or Gravielinos. The Gabrielinos inhabited the territory in Los Angeles County south of the Sierra Madre, half of Orange County and the two islands, Santa Catalina and San Clemente.[9] The natives living at Santa Monica

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9. A. L. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 620-621.

were classed among the Gabrielinos and occupied one of the most favored areas along the coast.

Of the Gabrielinos in a Handbook of the Indians of California, A. L. Kroeber wrote:[10]

> The Gabrielinos held the great bulk of the most fertile lowland portion of Southern California. They occupied also a stretch of pleasant and sheltered coast and the most favored ones of the Santa Barbara Islands. They seem to have been the most advanced group south of the Tehachapi, except perhaps the Chumash. They certainly were the wealthiest and most thoughtful of all Shoshoneans of the State, and dominated these civilizationally whenever contacts occurred. Their influence spread even to alien peoples. They have melted away so completely that we know more of the fine facts of the culture of ruder tribes; but everything points to these very efflorescences having had their origin with the Gabrielino.

The Gabrielinos lived in well built houses of tule mats laid on a framework of poles. Thatch of other materials was sometimes used on the islands and in the hills. Canoes were commonly used. These were sometimes dug out of a log, but because of the scarcity of good timber were more often built out of planks lashed and asphalted together. For navigating about the lagoons rush balsas were frequently used.

Trade between the natives of the coast and those

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10. A. L. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 628-629.

in the interior and on the islands was considerable. The people living along the shores exchanged shellbeads, dried fish, sea-otter furs, and soapstone vessels, for seeds, acorns and deer skins. Their standard currency was the disk bead of clamshell, from one-half to three-quarters of an inch diameter, the thicker ones being preferable.

The Gabrielinos used the type of basketry common to Southern California, and usually known as "Mission" basketry. Few baskets definitely known to be Gabrielino have been preserved. By the end of the mission period pottery had come into use but in aboriginal times clay was not worked and no pottery has been found in the ancient remains of the Gabrielino dwellings. Of the use made by the Gabrielinos of steatite vessels A. L. Kroeber wrote:[11]

> In the soapstone ledges of Santa Catalina the Gabrielino possessed the best available supply of this serviceable material in California; or at any rate the source most extensively utilized. The discoverers found them using stone vessels for cooking; and the condition of the island quarries, with half-finished pieces and tools still on the surface, is evidence that the industry was only interrupted after the importation of our civilization. From Santa Catalina the pots, and perhaps the raw material, were carried to the villages at Redondo and San Pedro and gradually distributed to the inland towns. The eastern Chumash may have got them from the people of Santa Monica and Topanga and from the Fernan-

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11. Kroeber, Handbook of the Indians of California, 628-630.

diño. But the presence of steatite articles in fair abundance on Santa Cruz and the other northern channel islands suggests, also a direct maritime dispersion to the Chumash, and from them to their kinsmen of the Santa Barbara Coast. Inland the vessels penetrated at least sporadically as far as the Yokuts of Tulare Lake, if scant archaeological records may be trusted. It is not sure that this entire area was served from Santa Catalina. But much of the supply evidently came from the island.

It is interesting that the steatite and the pottery areas of Southern California substantially exclude each other. Gabrielino and Chumash were flooded with the one material, and did not touch clay. Juaniño, Luiseño, Cahuilla, Dieguenño, Serrano, Mohave, and Yuma made pots; and it is only now and then that small or ornamental pieces of steatite were to be found among them.

When the soapstone pots broke, their pieces were bored at one corner to allow of the insertion of a stick to handle them by, and utilized as baking slabs or frying pans. Hundreds of such salvaged fragments have been found in old village sites. The occasional fine vessels of stone were not cook pots, but religious receptacles - possibly to drink toloache from. They are shell inlaid and untouched by fire. The shape, too, is that of an open bowl, not a jar. They have sometimes been taken for mortars, on account of their general form; but it is obvious that one blow with a pestle would have irreparably destroyed most of these delicately walled, polished, symmetrical, and ornamented objects of sandstone or waxlike steatite.

Most abundantly on Santa Catalina Islands, but also on the coast immediately opposite, on the Chumash Islands, and even on the Santa Barbara shore, a profusion of soapstone artifacts have been found. Besides recognizable ornaments and beads, there are several types whose evident lack of any utilitarian purpose

has caused them to be generally classed as made with ceremonial intent. Besides peculiar objects of the shape of hooks, spades and scoops, there are carvings of whales, which are of particular interest as one of the very few instances, in all aboriginal California, of anything like a representation. They are simple, as the stone is easy to work, but suggest a dorsally finned cetacean with considerable fidelity and no shadow of doubt. They may be plastic figures of the porpoises that guarded the Gabrielino world. The hooks and other shapes range from a fraction of an ounce to several pounds in weight, and pass through a transition of shapes which retain indeed a certain decorative or symbolic likeness that makes their unity of class certain, but are so variant in structural features as to dispel any possibility of each type having possessed a common utilitarian purpose. They served a religious purpose, then; and as their source corresponded with that ascribed by evidence and tradition alike to the Chungichnich cult- the balmy island of Santa Catalina - the conclusion is very hard to avoid that the worship and the art forms must have been associated. From this conviction we can argue with somewhat less confidence, but yet with probability, that something of the same specific Chungichnich ritual and mythology traveled with the figures from Santa Catalina to the Chumash islanders and mainlanders..

When the Gabrielino Indians first encountered the Spaniards they accepted the gifts which were given them. The food of the white men, however, was regarded with distaste and secretly buried. They did not fear poisoning but believed that to eat the food of another race was bound to bring illness.

The Gabrielinos are the first people in historic times who used movable stone mortars for grinding acorns

and plants into food. Of this use of stone mortars Kroeber wrote:[12]

> The soil of Northern California is studded with pot-shaped mortars, but the natives misunderstood their purpose or regard them as magical objects, and pound on slabs or in holes worn into natural surfaces of rock. In the central part of the State the portable mortar begins to appear, and the basket hopper, the accompaniment of the pounded slab, commences to go out of use, but the bedrock mortar hole remains the standard, at least for acorns. From the Gabrielino on, however, south to the Dieguẽño, east to the Mohave, and west perhaps, to the Chumash, the stone mortar is not merely a buried relic from a remote prehistoric age but a utensil of every day modern use. Some of these southern tribes cement a basket to the rim of the stone; the Chumash, asphalt it also to slabs; but the mortar can also be used just as successfully, and sometimes perhaps more conveniently, without this extension. Perhaps this is why the hopper has not been reported from the Gabrielino. That they knew the device is almost certain from their location between groups that employed it.

Least is known of the social practices of the Gabrielinos than any other side of their culture. Each village had a chief who was much respected and deferred to. The rank was hereditary in the male line. Each chief went by the name of his village plus the suffix - pik or - vik. Marriage was made by purchase. Chiefs and other prominent men usually had several wives. Until the Spanish padres introduced interment of the dead, the Gabrielinos burned

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12. Kroeber, Handbook of Indians of California, 631-632.

them. Many skeleton have been found on Santa Catalina Island suggesting burial to have been the usual method of disposal. On the mainland few human bones are found except on the coast opposite Santa Catalina at Santa Monica, Topanga, San Pedro and Redondo. The natives along this stretch of coast and on Santa Catalina differed from the rest of the Gabrielinos in respect to this custom.[13] Most of the Gabrielinos of the Santa Monica region came under the influence of the mission at San Gabriel. The padres taught them more civilized ways of doing things and useful trades such as carpentry, agriculture, weaving, etc. San Gabriel became one of the most prosperous of all the missions, owning land extending from the mountains to the sea. Vast herds of cattle roamed broad acres and during the mission period the hide trade with Yankee merchant ships was very profitable. San Pedro and Santa Monica were points from which hides were taken on board ship. The life of the natives centered more and more about the mission and its sphere of influence gradually widened. San Gabriel withstood the period of secularization and the encroachment of increasing numbers of American settlers, better than most of the missions and long continued its period of usefulness.

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13. Kroeber, Handbook of Indians of California, 633.

In 1781, the town of Los Angeles was founded about sixteen miles from Santa Monica. The new settlement grew slowly at first, but soon became the most populous and important center in Southern California, even overshadowing San Diego. As increasing numbers of white men settled in the vicinity, the Indians began to withdraw. Those living along the coast as at Santa Monica were among the first to abandon their villages; some retreating to remoter, uninhabited regions, others going to live near the mission.

Quite early in the nineteenth century four large land grants which included much of the area along the seacoast and Santa Monica Bay were made to early Spanish settlers. In 1805, the Topanga Malibu Sequit grant was made to Don José Bartolomo Tapia.[14] In 1839, the San Vicente y Santa Monica rancho was granted to Don Francisco Sepulveda. The rancho consisted of 38,000 acres, beautifully located, with pastures sloping over the Malibu hills and extending down into wooded Santa Monica Canyon. On it are located the present towns of Ocean Park, Venice and Santa Monica.

As in the case of many of the old Spanish land grants the limits of this rancho were vaguely defined. Francisco Marques and Isidro Reyes claimed and occupied a large

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14. C. S. Warren, History of the Santa Monica bay region, 18-19.

portion of the grant included in the present city of Santa Monica and Santa Monica Beach State Park. In 1828, a provisional grant of this portion of the rancho known as Boca de Santa Monica was made to Reyes. Controversy over the boundary claims continued for years and finally was settled in the United States courts sometime after the American occupation of California, Marques erected a residence on the rim of the canyon and later in Old Santa Monica Canyon.[15]

During Spanish and Mexican days life on the Santa Monica y San Vicente Rancho was typical of the times. The rancho included many fertile acres where vast herds of cattle roamed. Traffic in hides with merchant ships was one of the chief industries and the Santa Monica Rancho took many of these for trading down to the nearby port of San Pedro. It was a pleasant, easy going era. The rancheros had little to worry them. Wealth came easily, Indian laborers did most of the work, and there was a great deal of leisure time to enjoy in entertainment and social events. Lavish hospitality was characteristic of the times with many gay fiestas, fandangos, games, outdoor barbecues, etc. Many of the social events centered in Los Angeles about the homes of the prominent old families there, but the outlying ranchos were equally popular

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15. Warren, History of the Santa Monica bay region, 19-23.

places of entertainment and the Sepulvedas of Santa Monica were prominent members of one of the important old Spanish California families. Old Santa Monica Canyon was long a popular rendezvous for outdoor barbecues and recreation for the families living there and in the town of Los Angeles, and continued to be increasingly so during the early days of American occupation.

The modern town of Santa Monica was begun in 1875. In that year Colonel Robert S. Baker and Senator John P. Jones purchased from Sepulveda the Santa Monica y San Vicente Rancho, paying the sum of $54,000 for 38,409 acres. Later they added other land until their possession extended over a mile and a half of frontage along the ocean and for two miles south. A town-site was laid out and named for the bay. Lots were sold quickly and the town grew up almost over night. Within nine months it had a population of a 1,000 individuals and some 150 homes.[16]

The growth of Santa Monica was stimulated in the first years of its existence by plans of Colonel Robert Baker and General Edward Beale to develop there a great rail-road terminus and shipping port. For years Santa Monica and San Pedro vied with each other to be the port for the traffic from Los Angeles, but eventually San Pedro was selected by a

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16. Cooper, Rider's California, 494.

government commission as best fitted for the purpose. For a time after the failure of the railroad and harbor projects Santa Monica suffered a decline in population and growth. Thereafter the city abandoned its efforts to become a commercial center and within a few years forged ahead as a residential and seaside community. Well adapted by nature for this purpose and located so near the fast growing metropolis of Los Angeles, Santa Monica has progressed continuously and gained world fame as a beach and pleasure resort.

Santa Monica is famous for the beauty, large extent and safety of its bathing beach. Thousands yearly enjoy bathing in its fine surf, and also the good fishing it affords. In the Travelers handbook to California, George Wharton James writes of Santa Monica:

> A beautiful town with broad streets, over-arched with a canopy of branches; a town spread out on the broad bank of an upland and peering out through a fine grove upon the Pacific; a town with homes flower-embowered; a town surrounded by a picturesque country given over to green fields and large orchards, with a background of green hills that swell into purple mountains, such is Santa Monica.
>
> From the edge of the bluff is seen one of America's great playgrounds, a magnificent beach, a broad expanse of glistening sand that affords fine surf-bathing. Off to the right the great ocean pier at port Los Angeles reaches a mile out into the ocean, to the left a rugged headland marks the bay's domain....
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> For many years Santa Monica has been the most popular of Southern California seaside resorts. This is easily understood, for to

go swimming in this pleasant surf, to sail upon the pellucid waters of the bay, to fish from the fine pleasure wharf or the ocean and of its great commercial neighbor, to dream upon the moonlit beach with the air moving gently to the music of the surf, to drive among the wooded canyons of the mountains or tramp beneath the clear dawn along the far stretches of the beach...are indeed experiences to be desired.

Here upon the beach in December, one may watch the bathers dancing through the surf, with the odor of roses in the air. Santa Monica is but seventeen miles from Los Angeles. The Southern Pacific Railway, and the Los Angeles and Pacific Electric Railway connect the cities electric cars to be passengers between the Hotel Arcadia and the business center of Los Angeles every half hour, giving the choice of three routes - one via the foothills and Hollywood, and another through the blooming Cahuenga Valley, and a third through a beautiful part of the metropolis, past club houses and golf links. The time is about fifty minutes. The Southern Pacific maintains fast local service with uptown stations at both ends, the trains running through in about thirty minutes.

There is good fishing at Santa Monica, for between the Channel Islands and the Southern California Coast is the best salt water rod- and -reel fishing in the world. The game tuna, the great sea bass, yellow tail, albicore, barracuda, and many kinds of surf fish afford rare sport. Hunting is excellent, and many nimrods make the neighboring valleys and mountains the scenes of their exploits. In the Santa Monica Mountains are deer and bear, and up among the pines are mountain quail and gray squirrels, with an occasional bob cat. The valleys are well stocked with doves and valley quail, to say nothing of rabbits ,which are exceedingly plentiful. Winter duck grounds are not far distant. Yatching and boating on the bay are favorite pastimes of visitors and midwinter, surf bathing is a delightful pastime.

In 1910, Senator John P. Jones sold his interests

in Santa Monica with the exception of his home to the Santa Monica Land Company. The property was placed on the market and most of it sold.[17] The State Park Commission has acquired 13.66 acres of the beach land at the mouth of Santa Monica Canyon for the purpose of a state park, from the California Trust Company and the City of Los Angeles. Valued at two million dollars this valuable beach property extends for almost a quarter of a mile along the ocean front. It has become a famous all year playground, and reserves for the use of the people of California one of the finest beaches in Southern California. Fishing, surf bathing, hiking and boating are sports to be enjoyed here. A picnic area is provided for its visitors. A three mile long promenade connects Santa Monica with Ocean Park to the south. There are numerous amusement places along the beach as well as a pleasure pier extending out into the ocean.

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17. J. M. Guinn, A history of California and an extended history of Los Angeles and environs, 455.

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SANTA MONICA BEACH STATE PARK

(Summary by Lois Ann Woodward)

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The Indians in the vicinity of Santa Monica were known as Gabrielinos and occupied one of the most favored areas along the coast. The Gabrielinos, were one of the most advanced groups south of the Tehachapi and were the wealthiest and most thoughtful of all the Shoshoneans of the State and dominated them civilizationally wherever contacts occurred. Most of the Gabrielinos of Santa Monica came under the influence of the mission at San Gabriel. The padres taught them useful trades and more civilized ways of doing things.

Quite early in the nineteenth century four large land grants which included much of the area along the seacoast and Santa Monica Bay were made to early Spanish

settlers. In 1839 the San Vicente y Santa Monica Rancho was granted to Don Francisco Sepulveda. The rancho consisted of 38,000 acres, beautifully located, with pastures sloping over the Malibu hills and down into wooded Santa Monica Canyon. On it are located the present towns of Ocean Park, Venice and Santa Monica.

The modern town of Santa Monica was begun in 1875. In that year Colonel Robert S. Baker and Senator John P. Jones purchased from Sepulveda the Santa Monica y San Vicente Rancho, paying the sum of $54,000 for 38,409 acres. A townsite was laid out and named for the bay.

Santa Monica is famous for the beauty, large extent and safety of its bathing beach. The state park here is a famous all year seaside playground and reserves to the people of California one of Southern California finest beaches.

S.P #57

SANTA MONICA BEACH STATE PARK

(Summary by Lois Ann Woodward)

Santa Monica Beach State Park, sixteen miles from Los Angeles consists of 13.66 acres of beach land at the mouth of Santa Monica Canyon. Excellent surf bathing, fishing and boating make this beautifully situated beach, a popular all year playground for thousands of visitors.