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FRÉMONT (GAVILAN) PEAK STATE PARK

(Summary by George Tays)

Frémont Peak State Park occupies the area at the top of Gavilan Peak, which is also known as Frémont's Peak, and Hawk's Peak. It is located on the western side of Gavilan Range, which runs southwesterly as the boundary between San Benito and Monterey counties.

It is the highest peak in the range with an elevation of 3169 feet, situated in latitude $36^{\circ} 46'$ north, longitude $121^{\circ} 37'$ west. Its airline distance from San Juan Bautista is six miles, and eight miles from Salinas. The view from the top of Gavilan Peak is magnificent, as the surrounding country with its mountains, rivers, valleys and ocean, can be seen for over one hundred miles in every direction.

When the Spaniards settled California they named this range Sierra del Gavilan, and it was so known until 1846. In December, 1845 Captain John C. Frémont and his exploring party entered California. Early in January, 1846, he visited Monterey and obtained permission to winter in the San Joaquin valley. In February, disregarding the regulations, he appeared with his party in the vicinity of Monterey, and on March 3, 1846 camped at William Hartnell's

ranch, Alisal, in the Salinas Valley, just south of Gavilan Peak.

Much alarmed, on March 5th, General José Castro ordered Frémont to leave the settled area of California. Frémont became angered and refused to leave, defying the authorities to drive him out. That afternoon he moved from Alisal, ascended Gavilan Peak and camped near the top. There his men built a rude, strong log fort and entrenched themselves. Next day using a sapling for a flagstaff they raised their flag over the fort on March 6, 1846.

General Castro at once raised a large force to expel Frémont. Meanwhile U. S. Consul Thomas O. Larkin acting as mediator tried to persuade Frémont to leave, and Castro not to attack. Then on the night of March 9th Frémont broke camp and departed into the San Joaquin valley. His going ended that incident but thereafter, Gavilan Peak became known as Frémont's Peak.

For sixty years nothing of historic interest took place there. Then in 1906, Major E. A. Sherman organized the Frémont Memorial Association to erect a Frémont monument on top of the peak. Unable to do so, the society instituted a yearly pilgrimage early in March to raise the flag on the spot where Frémont had done so. In 1908 the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West who joined in the ceremonies

dedicated a flagpole. During October, 1932, the same societies dedicated a plaque and a new staff, and presented a large American flag and a State flag, to be raised on the peak.

Since then the peak has been taken over by the State and created into a state park. A highway has been built from San Juan to the top of the peak. The yearly flag raising ceremonies still take place in March between the 4th and 9th. Each year the park becomes more popular as a recreation spot due to the grand view obtained from there.

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Gavilan Peak was renamed Fremont's Peak because Captain Frémont raised the flag over his fort there March 6, 1846. Fremont Memorial Association on March 4, 1906, began yearly flag raising pilgrimage to peak, in October, 1932, dedicating a plaque and flagpole. Since then it has been created a State park.