

HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

THE US INVADES CALIFORNIA



John D. Sloat, the first American to govern California

By Joe Carotenuti

170 years ago, California had been under the sovereignty of Mexico for some 25 years and, before that, of Spain. Fearing a British intrusion and after years of trying to acquire through purchase, Commodore John D. Sloat came ashore on July 7, 1846 at Monterey (then the capital), raised the Stars and Stripes, declared everyone now American citizens (not true, it took another 4 years) and better days were ahead.

Ill and having requested retirement, Sloat turned governance over to Commodore Robert F. Stockton (seen at left) on July 23. While many Californios welcomed the change, as reported last month, there were some who were not enthusiastic about the invaders. However, while the Treaty of Cahuenga ended local hostilities, the Mexican-American War



raged on for another two years.

During all the time until statehood, the chief executive was a commissioned military officer. While some call them governors, the title is descriptive, not political. There were no elections for officials except some scattered efforts in local jurisdictions.

For much of American expansion, vast amounts of land were declared territories (there are still some today) with government officials, etc. There was no such transition for California. In four years, it went from an occupied land to statehood interrupted by the epic Gold Rush ignoring for the most part any affinity to establishing bureaucratic niceties.

While Stockton appointed the legendary John C. Fremont as governor, General Stephen W. Kearney with orders from Washington D. C. appointed Colonel Richard B. Mason to the job on May 31, 1847. It was Mason who had to confront the debilitating avalanche of gold seekers for two tumultuous years until he was relieved of command by General Bennet (one "t") Riley. In the meanwhile, desertions for the gold fields were common.

Facing near-riotous civil unrest, Riley (seen at right) decided to call for elections of representatives to travel to Monterey to form the first California Constitution. While he did not have the authority to do so, ignoring the call of the population to enter the Union would most likely have led to armed conflict. Locally, 24 men cast their votes for delegates. Within a short time, the Constitution was completed and by mid-November 1849 was approved by a vote of 12,064 to 811. Undoubtedly faced with the dilemma of ignoring the vote, Congress approved admission. With a provisional government including elections, Riley's last day of command was December 20, 1849.



Given the military advantages and the incomparable San Francisco Bay for trade augmented by the fabulous wealth generated by the gold mine, one asks: "What was the problem?"

In a word: "slavery."

At the time, there were 15 states on either side of recognizing/prohibiting the practice. California, as the 31st state, broke the tie. Beyond discussion here, the Compromise of 1850 allowed the state into the Union as a "free" state but the national referendum against slavery would erupt a decade later as the United States descended into the abyss called the Civil War. Some of the same officers who served in California are mostly remembered today for their service across the continent.

For the Golden State (Fremont's name), the four years were dynamic and unexpected but not unusual. Given the first notable Westerners established Spanish missions in 1769, just 81 years later, the vastly underpopulated land joined the Union. Isolated from other states, hugging the Pacific Ocean, boasting incredible wealth from mines, California continued (and continues) to seek a definition.

Joe was the recipient of the History Center's 2020 Award for Historic Preservation Advocacy. You can read more about Joe's research on the Mid-State Fair in the August 2021 edition of the Central Coast Journal, found online at www.slojournal.com

Merci Beaucoup!

Many thanks to everyone who helped make our Parisian Farm-to-Table Luncheon a

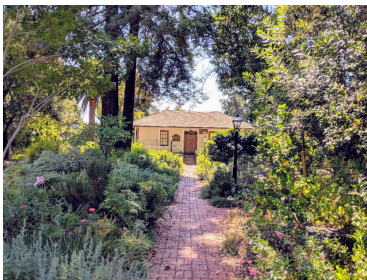


huge success! From the art and music to the food and drink, it truly was a perfect day.

If you missed out, don't worry, we'll have more events in the gardens for you to attend.

Take home a piece of the Dallidet with our [2022 Dallidet Garden Calendar](#)! Each month features 3 photographs of flowers, plants, fruits, or vegetables growing in the Dallidet Gardens, along with history and descriptions of each plant.

Bring the beauty of the Dallidet Gardens into your home for the whole year! [Click here to order now!](#)



And, we are still offering open hours at the Dallidet Adobe! Now through October, we'll be open from noon to 4:00 pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

September and October are probably the best months on the Central Coast - the weather gets nice and the tourists go home, so this is the perfect time for locals to visit this site in their own backyard.

You can check the [calendar on our website](#) to make sure the gardens aren't closed for a private event. If you want to book your own private event, email us at info@historycenterslo.org



September Carnegie Lecture

The Rios Caledonia Adobe

We are thrilled to be returning to in-person lectures - while maintaining Zoom accessibility - with the phenomenal story of the Rios Caledonia Adobe, a jewel of the North County. In collaboration with the [Friends of the Rios Caledonia](#), you will be able to learn the story of this incredible landmark and the extraordinary work that the Friends are doing to conserve and maintain the site.

Coming up on September 10, 2021. [Click here to learn more or to register.](#)

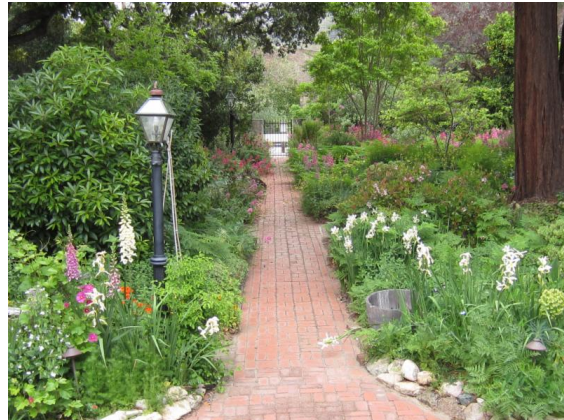
You can also support the Rios-Caledonia by taking part in their BBQ this Saturday, August 28. [Click here for more information.](#)

Looking for peace in nature?

Our fantastic mindfulness instructor Kelli Schonher still has one more opportunity for you to clear your mind and connect with the Dallidet Gardens.

On **Saturday, August 28th**, deepen your enjoyment of the many dimensions that Nature provides through the simple ability of playfulness.

[Click here for more information or to register.](#)



King David's Masonic Lodge in San Luis Obispo will be hosting festivities on Saturday, September 11, 2021, to unveil their newly restored painting of George Washington by the famed French itinerant painter Leon Trousset. Speakers will present discuss life in San Luis Obispo in 1870, the importance of this artwork, and also commemorate the 20th anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

[Click here](#) for more information and who to contact for reservations

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Kessler".

Thomas Kessler
Executive Director



