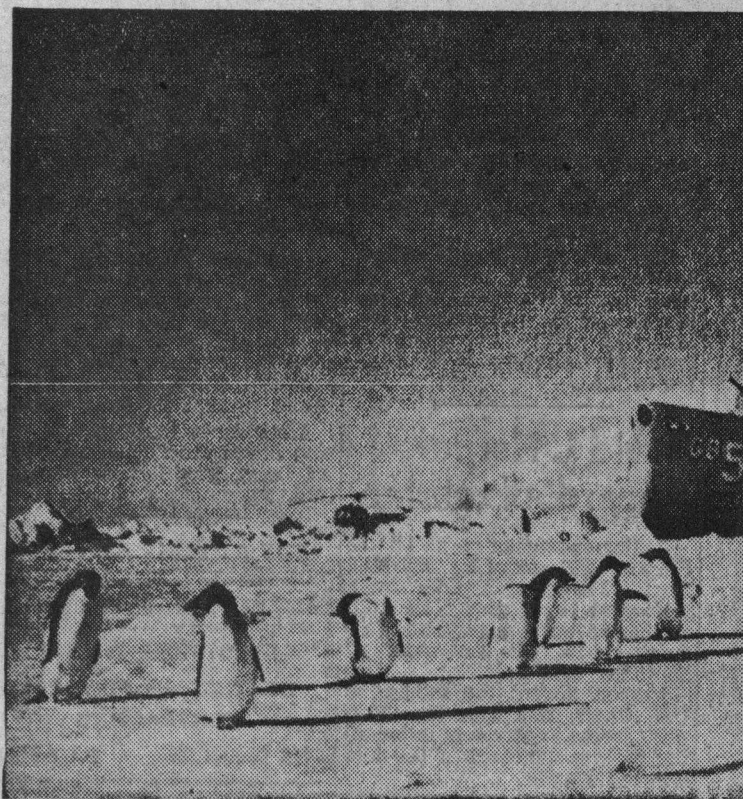


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Cabrillo Is Almost Forgotten Man Among Spanish Explorers

By Wally Trabing

When Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo stood on the poop deck of his tiny Spanish ship in Monterey bay, little could he know that 400 years later an institution of learning would carry his name.

He was given this posthumous honor Monday by the governing board of the newly-formed Santa Cruz county junior college district at its first official meeting.

Cabrillo, almost a forgotten man, has come into favor recently by historians who have dug far enough back to realize this rugged explorer was probably the first leader of the "new world" to lay eyes on the beautiful but treacherous California coast line.

Cabrillo college isn't the first to honor the early "Californian." Highway No. 1, running from Mexico to Oregon, has been proclaimed the Cabrillo highway. There is a Cabrillo national monument beside San Diego bay.

Exactly when or where Cabrillo was born apparently is not known. He was said to be Portuguese but as a young man offered his services to New Spain. He fought for Spain in a Mexican war of 1520.

Advancing to the rank of captain, Cabrillo went into the exploring business in 1542. He

brought a fleet of crude ships around South America and up the coast, entering San Diego bay in September of 1542.

Historians say he sailed into Monterey bay in November and anchored near the Pajaro river. This is apparently as far as he got. It is not more than 15-20 miles away from where the new college is expected to be located.

It is slated to be built between Santa Cruz and Watsonville.

Cabrillo was due to die January of the next year. He broke a leg or arm (depending on which document you read) while stepping ashore from a long boat on San Miguel island off Lower California, and died 12 days later.

One of his boat pilots, named Ferrer, took the fleet further up the coast as far as Point Reyes, north of San Francisco, then headed back to Spain.

Henry R. Wagner, of the California Historical society, whose book "Cabrillo" is available in the Santa Cruz public library, wrote that another explorer, Sebastian Vizcaino, came sailing up the coast in 1602 and changed a lot of names which Cabrillo's boys had established, starting a trend which nearly pushed Cabrillo into oblivion.

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