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THE MYSTERY OF JUAN RODRIGUEZ CABRILLO

By
HENRY SCHWARTZ

Who was this Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, whose *San Salvador* and *Victoria* ghosted through the morning haze into San Diego Bay on September 28, 1542?

Was he Portuguese or Spanish? When was he born? What did he look like? Where is his actual grave site?

It has been 431 years since his voyage of discovery, and still there are more questions than answers.

Why did the Spanish brass dismiss his exploration as unimportant? And why did the Spanish crown allow Cabrillo's properties to be seized by jealous rivals, forcing his family into poverty?

History books generally treat the discoverer of the Western coast of America as an obscure explorer whose life was shrouded in mystery. The documents on his life are few and sketchy, which is why his biographies are starvation thin.

The mystery begins with his nationality. The standard historians of the Spanish exploration of the Pacific — Bancroft, Bolton and Wagner — have been of one mind: Cabrillo was Portuguese.

However, their conclusion was primarily based on a single sentence. In a history published in 1615, the Royal Chronicler of Castile, Antonio Herrera, penned a line about a certain "Captain Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese and a person well versed in affairs of the sea."

However, recent historical detectives, including Professor W. Michael Mathes of the University of San Francisco are beginning to question Herrera's statement. For one thing, the name Cabrillo, which could be Cabrilho in Portuguese, is virtually unknown in Portugal.

After a search of Portuguese genealogies, archives and encyclopedias, Visconde Lagoa, the official Portuguese biographer of Cabrillo, concedes that the name is not Portuguese.

Possibly it is an alteration of the Portuguese name Cabrihla, or a nickname derived from one of the villages called Cabril. Or, Cabrillo may have been the surname of his Spanish mother, and he chose to use her maiden name when he threw in his lot with the Spaniards.

In Spain it is the custom for the family name to follow the given name, with the last name being the mother's maiden name. Thus, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo would be commonly spoken of as Juan Rodriguez.

This may explain why, when he died on the Channel Island of San Miguel, on January 3, 1543, his crew named the island Isle of Juan Rodriguez and carved JRs on his gravestone.

Last year a UC-Berkeley anthropologist, Dr. Robert F. Heizer, produced evidence that a long questioned grave marker may well be the authentic Cabrillo burial

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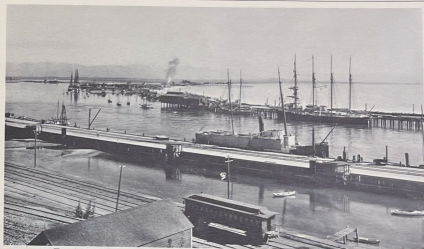
The Branding Iron

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Terminal Island as viewed from San Pedro, circa 1899. — DONALD DUKE COLLECTION

Terminal Island's Glamorous Past

By ANNA MARIE and EVERETT GORDON HAGER

The history of Terminal Island is unique and very colorful. Due to literally thousands of rattlesnakes being washed out of their mountain homes and carried down by the torrential rains to a spit of sand dunes in San Pedro Bay, Spaniards gave it the name *La Isla de la Culebra de Cascabel* (Island of the Snake of the Rattle). All too soon with the coming of the Yankee the lilting Spanish name was brusquely shortened to Rattlesnake — later to be renamed

Terminal after the new Los Angeles Terminal Railway which built to its terminus in San Pedro Bay.

On the ocean side of Terminal, a smooth sandy spit of land soon attracted swimmers and picnickers. This area, named Brighton Beach, rapidly became the mecca of the Southland. Here the beach reached gradually, allowing the bathers to wade a considerable distance into the blue waters of

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