

Earl's Diary - Monday - May 5, 2014

Greetings to my Loyal Readers, both near and far;

The Gathering is over. Trailers, and their owners, are pulling out in large numbers. This morning as I peeked out of The Peanut there were only about 10 rigs still left in the campground. I had planned to get underway by 9:00. Of course, that didn't happen. There's always some last thing to do. Hitching the trailer to the truck is (sometimes) a major undertaking. Since this was the last stop for a week or so, emptying the holding tanks was a necessary duty. Saying farewell to friends also takes some time. I did surprise myself by taking off at 10:00.

I was completely turned around as I drove out of the park, and almost headed in the wrong direction. I knew I needed to head north on Highway 101. I was almost positive the onramp was across the freeway. Excitedly I went under the freeway expecting to find the north bound onramp. Uh Oh! Not! That was the south bound onramp! The only obvious thing to do was circle around and go back under the freeway. Oh yes! There it is! The north bound onramp! Finally I'm on the way!

King City is about the southern most point of California's vast Salinas Valley. So, heading north I was traversing that great valley. I know my nearby Loyal Readers are familiar with the area. You readers can zoom ahead now. This part is for my out-of-state readers. Here's probably more than you ever wanted to know, but - - - here goes - - -

The Salinas Valley is one of the major valleys and most productive agricultural regions in California. The valley was named during the late 18th-century Spanish colonial Alta-California period, and in Spanish *salina* is the term for a salt marsh, salt lake, or salt pan. The Salinas Valley runs approximately 90 miles northwest from King City towards Salinas. Before colonization, the valley was inhabited by indigenous Salinans who lived by hunting and gathering and spoke the Salinan language extinct since the 1950s.

Agriculture dominates the economy of the valley. Promoters call the Salinas Valley "the Salad Bowl of the World" for the production of lettuce, broccoli, peppers and numerous other crops. The climate and long growing season are also ideal for the floral industry and grape vineyards planted by world-famous vintners.





In particular, a large majority of the salad greens consumed in the U.S. are grown within this region. Strawberries, lettuce, tomatoes, and spinach are the dominant crops in the valley. Other crops include broccoli, cauliflower, wine grapes, and celery. Due to the intensity of local agriculture, the area has earned itself the nickname "America's Salad Bowl."



As I traveled north, spring plowing, planting, and harvesting were very much in evidence in varying stages. Workers were out in full force!

Between 1683 and 1834, Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries established a series of religious outposts into present-day California. Eventually they established a string of missions stretching from San Diego to Sonoma. Each mission was approximately 30 miles apart, roughly a days journey between each.



Highway 101 (sort of) follows the route of the historic El Camino Real which connected the missions. Mission bells appear frequently along the roadside.

I was on my way home, and I wanted to spend some time at my next stop - Mission San Juan Bautista - up the road about 20 miles from the town of Salinas.



### ***The Old Mission San Juan Bautista...***

...began with a group of leather-jacketed soldiers and a few Native Americans watching a tonsured Franciscan priest raise his eyes and hands toward the sky...

"In the name of our blessed Father, and the saint whose feast we commemorate today, St. John the Baptist..."







The day was June 24, 1797, a Saturday, and the priest was Fr. Fermin de Lasuen, Presidente of the California Missions successor to Junipero Serra. This mission was one of four established by Fr. Lasuen in the summer of 1797 and the fifteenth of the twenty-one missions in Alta California.



Construction began almost immediately. The early construction included an adobe church, a granary, barracks, a monastery, and some adobe houses. In June, 1803, the cornerstone was laid for the present church. With three naves or aisles, it became the widest of all the mission churches. It was dedicated on June 23, 1812.



The San Andreas Fault runs along the base of the hill below the cemetery. In 1906, there was a violent earthquake that shook the greater part of central California. The side walls of the church collapsed. They were restored in 1976. The Old Mission San Juan Bautista has had an unbroken succession of pastors since its founding on June 24, 1797.



Notice how thick the walls are between the rooms





Vestiges of the original El Camino Real can still be seen north of the cemetery. A portion of the trail appears behind this fence. I couldn't decide if that was what was preserved or this dirt path running beside it.







Of course, I couldn't resist the temptation to visit the garden and take a few close-up photos of some colorful flowers.



Looks like a bunch of carrots



Passion Flower

I thought the varying angles of the roof provided an interesting pattern.







The church was secularized in 1835, when much of the mission property was seized by the Mexican government. In 1895, the present mission buildings and 55 acres were given back to the Church by Federal decree of the United States government. San Juan Bautista has the only original Spanish Plaza remaining in California.

Adjacent to the mission grounds is San Juan Bautista State Park.



The park is part of a nationally recognized historic landmark adjacent to a portion of California's 15th Spanish era mission. The park and its Plaza represent what was once the "town square" of the largest town in central California and a vital crossroad for travel between northern and southern California.

The park includes several structures built in the 1800s. The four main historic museums are the Plaza Hotel, the Zanetta House/ Plaza Hall, the Plaza Stables, and the Castro-Breen Adobe. Many of the interiors are arranged as furnished vignettes or with colorful and informative exhibits that help create a unique learning environment for people of all ages. The park also features a blacksmith shop, the historic jail, and an early American settler's cabin.



Numerous fourth grade students from the surrounding area have visited San Juan Bautista as a field trip for the California history thread of the curriculum. It is an interesting and educational place if you are anywhere in the area. Do drop in for a visit. Downtown San Juan Bautista, with its cute little tourist shops is just one short block away from the mission and state park. There's not a single chain outfit in the whole town.

I spent a little over an hour here. Now it was time to hit the road again. It was another three and a half hours to home. I arrived home at 4:30, just in time to empty The Peanut and put it in its stall. I'll bet it can't wait until the next trip --AND thank you all for traveling with me this time. Bye for now - - Earl