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MEXICAN GOVERNORS OF CALIFORNIA

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From the time of the achievement of independence by Mexico in the year 1822, till 1846, July 7, when Alta California became a territory of the United States, eleven persons served as governors, or Gefes Politicos, of the Province; two of them serving two terms, thus making thirteen administrations during the Mexican national regime. All of these eleven governors, except Gov. de Sola and Gov. Gutierrez, who were born in Spain, were natives of Mexico; and four of them, namely: Governors Arguello, Pico, Castro and Alvarado, were born in California. It is not known that any of these officials is now living.

The first Mexican governor was Pablo Vicente de Sola, who was in office when Mexico gained her independence in 1822; and his term extended till 1823. He was a native of Spain, where he received a good education; and he came to Mexico as a military officer prior to 1805. At the time of his appointment by the Viceroy as Governor of California, in 1815, he was a lieutenant-colonel of the Mexican army. He arrived at Monterey August 30, 1815. He filled the office of governor about seven years. Being elected a deputy to the Mexican Congress he left Monterey November 22, 1823, and San Diego January 2, 1824, arriving in the City of Mexico in the following June, where he soon after died.

Governor de Sola was succeeded by Luis Antonio Arguello, whose term extended to June 1825. Governor Arugello was born at the Presidio of San Francisco, June 21, 1784. He died there March 27, 1830, and was buried at the Mission by Father Estenega. His widow, who was the daughter of Sergeant Jose Dolores Ortega, was the owner of Las Pulgas Rancho. She died in 1874.

Governor Arguello was universally commended by the old-time Californians and Americans as an able, amiable and honest citizen and governor. The Arguellos of early times, and their descendants, have been accounted among the first families of California.

Jose M. Echeandia was the next governor. Gov. Echeandia

was a native of Mexico; he was a lieutenant-colonel and director of a college of engineers, at the time of his appointment as Gefe Politico, y Comandante Militar, that is governor and military commandant of the Californians. He came to Loreto, Lower California, by way of San Blas, in June, 1825, where he remained till October, re-organizing the political affairs of the Provinces. He arrived at San Diego in November, and made that Presidio his official residence. He carefully studied the country's needs; and tentatively tried some experiments to test the feelings of the friars and the capacities of the Indians, as to the practicability of secularizing the Missions, which Mexican statesmen already foresaw must be brought about some time if California was ever to have a future as a civilized State. As it had been demonstrated that it was impossible to make self-governing citizens of the Indians, it became apparent that the settlement of the country by Mexican *citizens*, *i. e.*, by *gente de rason*, must be encouraged, by making it possible for them to acquire a permanent foothold. It was during the incumbency of Gov. Echeandia that the law or reglamento of 1828, relating to the granting of lands was passed by the Mexican Congress. The Padres naturally distrusted him, because he represented, according to their views, the new republic, which they instinctively felt was inimical to their interests.

The details of Gov. Echeandia's administration are full of interest, and as I have not room to recount them here, I hope sometime to present them in a separate paper, as I have already done in the case of Gov. Pico and several other notable governors, whose striking characteristics are worthy of separate treatment.

After administering the office of governor for nearly six years, Gov. Echeandia sailed from San Diego in May, 1833, and returned to the City of Mexico, where, as late as 1855-6, Mrs. Gen. Ord, who knew him well in California, saw him frequently, and, at a still later period, he died there at an advanced age.

Manuel Victoria, who, after Mexico had gained her independence, in the struggle for which he took part, was, in 1825, military commandant at Acapulco, of which place he was probably a native; and in 1820 he was comandante of Baja California; and in the latter year he was appointed Gefe Politico or Civil Governor of Alta California, to succeed Gov. Echeandia. He arrived at Monterey, by land from Loreto, and assumed the duties of governor on the 31st of January, 1831, serving about one year or till January, 1832, when the people arose in rebellion against his arbitrary rule, and drove him out of the country.

Victoria was generally regarded more as a soldier than as a civilian; and, while he was a man of much force of character, he lacked tact, and sought to administer his civic duties by military methods, and, naturally, he became a very unpopular official. Moreover, his high-handed refusal to convene the Departmental Assembly (as was his duty), in order that the important and beneficent land laws of 1824 and 1828 might be made effective in California, so exasperated the people that they forced him to resign, which he did at San Gabriel, after a hostile encounter between his forces and the revolutionists at Cahuenga, and he was succeeded by Pio Pico as the senior member of the Departmental Assembly.

How abundant the causes were which moved the people in their summary action may be learned from the Manifesto of the revolutionists, of Nov. 29, 1831.

Gov. Pio Pico, the fifth Governor of California after Mexico became an independent nation, was a native of the Province, born at the Mission of San Gabriel in 1801. He was twice governor—in 1832, and again in 1845-6, he being incumbent of the gubernatorial office at the time California came under the jurisdiction of the United States.

As I have already presented to the Historical Society a biographical and character sketch of Gov. Pico (printed in the Society's Annual for 1894), it is unnecessary to enlarge here on the events and salient characteristics of his life. Our older members remember him well. He died in this city September 11, 1894, at the age of 93 years.

Of Gen. Jose Figueroa, one of the best and ablest Governors of California, I here give only a brief sketch, hoping at some future time to present a fuller account of his life.

Gov. Figueroa was one of the heroes of Mexico's long struggle for independence. In 1824 he was appointed Comandante General of Sonora and Sinaloa. He served as Governor and Military Commandant of California from January 14, 1833, till shortly before his death at Monterey, September 29, 1835. During his administration he did some very good work in organizing territorial and local government. As a capable, patriotic statesman, he served the people of California well, and won their respect and good will. The older Californians—and there are still living some who remember him well—had nothing but praise for the character and acts of Governor Jose Figueroa.

Gov. Jose Castro, the seventh Mexican Governor, was a native of California, born at Monterey in about the year 1810, where he

attended school from 1815 to 1820, or later. In 1828 he was secretary of the Monterey Ayuntamiento. He took an active part with other citizens in sending representatives to Mexico complaining of Governor Victoria's refusal to convoke the Departmental Assembly and of other arbitrary acts of that official.

In August, 1835, Gov. Figueroa, because of failing health, appointed Castro (he being then the senior member of the Departmental Assembly), as Acting Gefe Politico or Governor. In accordance with the national law of May 6, 1822, Gov. Figueroa, just before his death, ordered the separation of the civil and military chieftainships, and directed that Jose Castro should succeed him as Governor *ad interim*, and that Nicolas Gutierrez (as ranking officer), should become Comandante General. Castro served as Governor till January, 1836, and later held numerous other official positions.

Gov. Nicolas Gutierrez was a native of Spain, and came to Mexico as a boy. He served with Figueroa in the Mexican revolution, and came with him to California in 1833, as captain. He was promoted to a lieutenant-colonelship in July of that year, and in 1834-6 he was commissioner for the secularization of the Mission of San Gabriel. He was acting comandante-general from October 8, 1835, to January 2, 1836; and from the latter date till May 3, he was governor and comandante. He was also military chief in the south during the incumbency of Gov. Chico (who succeeded him as Governor), or till July 31, and he was again Governor till his overthrow by Alvarado, November 4, 1836. Gov. Gutierrez was arbitrary in his methods, and treated the Departmental Assembly brusquely, and in his intercourse with the people, he showed little tact, and as a natural result he became very unpopular. Both of his terms as Governor were short, and his services to the Province were comparatively unimportant. In person he was of medium stature, stout, with light complexion and reddish hair, and he had a squint in his right eye, which gave him the nickname of "El Tuerto."

Gov. Juan Bautista Alvarado, whose term extended from December 7, 1836, to December 31, 1842, was a native of California, born at Monterey, February 14, 1809. He was the son of Sergeant Jose F. Alvarado and Maria Josefa Vallejo de Alvarado. He acquired such rudiments of an education as were available in his time; and his life was an eventful one, which should be of interest to us; and possibly I may some time give our society a more detailed sketch of his career, as a somewhat important factor in early California history, of the later Mexican period. He filled numerous

official positions; and, being connected with prominent families, and possessing some natural ability, he exerted considerable influence in his time prior to the change of government. He was secretary of the Departmental Assembly from 1827 to 1834; and in 1836, having been elected a member of that body, he became its president.

Gov. Alvarado was elected to the Mexican Congress in 1845, but he did not go to Mexico. He was grantee of several ranchos, including Las Mariposas. In 1839 he married Martina Castro, daughter of Francisco Castro. They had several children. She died in 1875. Gov. Alvarado died July 13, 1882, in his 74th year.

Those who knew him say he was a man of genial temperament, courteous manners, and rare powers of winning friends. There are many native Californians as well as Americans still living, especially in the upper counties, who knew him well in his lifetime.

Gov. Manuel Micheltoarena, the last Mexican Governor of California but one, was appointed January 22, 1824; and he served as both Governor and military commandant till his surrender to the revolutionists, February 22, 1845. He was a native of Oajaca, of good family and some education. As a political and military chief he lacked sound judgment, though personally of amiable and courteous manners. He was seriously handicapped by having brought with him to California (under orders of the Mexican government, pursuant to a miserable policy), a considerable number of convicts as soldiers, whose lawlessness and brutality shocked decent citizens, and tended strongly to make the Governor unpopular. Micheltoarena and his "cholos," as his ragamuffin, thievish soldiers were called, became a bye-word with the Californians, and are still unpleasantly remembered by the old timers. After Micheltoarena's return to Mexico, he was elected a member of congress, and later, in 1850, he served as Comandante-General of Yucatan.

The following is a chronological list of Mexican Governors of Alta or Upper California, which may prove convenient for reference:

MEXICAN GOVERNORS OF CALIFORNIA: 1822-1846.

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| Pablo Vicente de Sola | Sept. 16, to Nov. 22, 1822. |
| Luis Arguello | Nov. 22, 1822, to June, 1825. |
| Jose M. Echeandia | June, 1825, to Jan., 1831. |
| Manuel Victoria, | Jan., 1831, to Jan., 1832. |
| Pio Pico | Jan., 1832, to Jan., 1833. |
| Jose Figueroa | Jan., 1833, to Aug., 1835. |
| Jose Castro | Aug., 1835, to Jan., 1836. |

Nicholas GutierrezJan., 1836, to May, 1836.
Marino ChicoMay, 1836, to July 31, 1836.
Nicolas GutierrezJuly, 1836, to Nov., 1836.
Juan B. AlvaradoNov., 1836, to Dec. 31, 1842.
Manuel MicheltoarenaDec., 1842, to Feb., 1845.
Pio PicoFeb., 1845, to July, 1846.