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FELIPE DE NEVE AND LOS ANGELES

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FELIPE DE NEVE AND LOS ANGELES

PASSAGE of time has proven the founding of the City of Los Angeles the outstanding accomplishment of Felipe de Neve for California among those which have had effect down to the present time.

Yet ironically, the spectacularly rapid growth of this city has itself obscured the memory of the man to whom it owes its existence. For almost a century and a half little more than his name was known in Los Angeles, and that only to a comparatively few of the historically-minded, most of whom mispronounced it.

It is claimed that the first civic recognition of Don Felipe de Neve (Fehlepeh day Nehvay) was given with dedication of the pool in the center of the Plaza to his memory early in the 'seventies, during settlement of the question of water rights involving the Plaza area.

The community's lapse of memory became complete after that until through the work of the Department of California History and Landmarks of the California Federation of Women's Clubs under chairmanship of Mrs. A. S. C. Forbes an incipient appreciation of Don Felipe de Neve was aroused in the community more than four decades later.

Subsequently Orra E. Monnette, as President of the Los Angeles Library Board, through addresses and the writing of a monograph embracing the known facts as to the life of Neve, secured on September 4, 1929, the city's first official and permanent recognition of Felipe de Neve with dedication of a Branch of the Public Library situated in Lafayette Park in his honor. A decade previously Cabrillo Chapter, D. A. R., had dedicated a sun dial in this park to the Founder's memory.

On this foundation, as significance of the city's history began to grow on its people, and sentiment for the 150th anniversary observance found public expression, the name of Felipe de Neve became recognized by an increasingly large portion of the population. Before the end of 1931 erection of an idealization of the young Neve in bronze, in the Plaza, was accomplished by Californiana Parlor, Native Daughters of the Golden West.

Dedication of the new Seventh Street viaduct in the name of Felipe de Neve is about to be secured. This effort also is headed by Mrs. Forbes and the California History and Landmarks Department of the Federation of Women's Clubs.

Doubtless these and similar efforts will eventually bear fuller fruit. Perhaps the name of Neve may be learned in future by citizens as they travel on some central thoroughfare called "Avenue Felipe de Neve." Such a tribute should be paid by his city. That it will be is not too much for historians to ask and to hope for.

Certainly it may confidently be hoped that as time goes on Felipe de Neve will grow increasingly significant in the minds of Angelinos, and in so far as historians are concerned, that a greater amount of authentic data regarding his life than is now available may be found, to enable them to tell in full, his story.

In the following article, Mr. Bynum has brought together a chronological account of Neve's activities in California from authentic documentary sources.