



Saving Carmel Valley History

by Jeff Ohlson, CVHS Historian

One the oldest structures in Carmel Valley, the 1895 “Carmelo Athletic and Social Club,” is located near the Mid Valley Shopping Center at the intersection of Robinson Canyon and Carmel Valley Roads. It sits on a small parcel recently acquired by the County of Monterey from the Carmel Unified School District. The district had been gifted the property and building from the Berwick Trust.

The group gathered in January to review the building and how it could be moved to another site in the Valley having safe public access and ample parking. Representatives from the Historical Society and Monterey County met with a professional house mover to discuss how such a move would be accomplished.

Much was learned about the feasibility, options, and logistics of a move. Later, Supervisor Mary Adams suggested that a Community Task Force be formed to obtain a community-wide consensus on what to do with this historic structure. In response to this request, representatives from CVHS and Carmel Valley Association (CVA) met recently to discuss how to proceed, which remains an ongoing discussion. 🏠

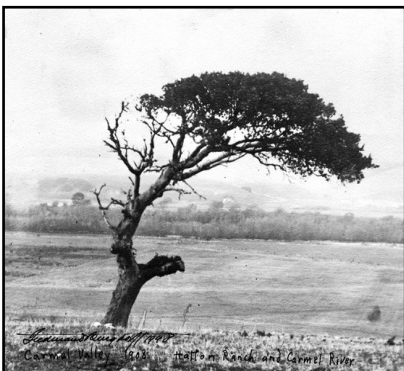


From left: George Salcido (County of Monterey), Chuck Scott (Scott Heavy Movers), Ivo Basor (County of Monterey), Jeff Ohlson and Kim Williams (CVHS)

So, Who Did Name the Carmel River?

by Elizabeth Barratt, CVHS Historian

Sebastián Vizcaíno (c.1550-1615), a merchant navigator sailing trade galleons between Mexico and the Philippines, had noticed the unexplored California Coast on return trips to Acapulco. With interest in its colonization potential, the Viceroy of New Spain commissioned him to explore the coast of Alta California in search of harbors for repairing the Manila Galleons.



The expedition departed Acapulco on May 5, 1602, with three vessels and a longboat, making stops north to name and chart locations. Besides the 200-man crew,

three Carmelite friars accompanied the voyage: Fray Andrés de la Asunción, Fray Antonio de la Ascención and Fray Tomás de Aquino.

Vizcaíno sailed into Monterey Bay on December 16, 1602, explored the area, and logged his reports. On the final layover day, January 3, 1603, he headed an expedition southeast from Monterey. The group included Vizcaíno, referred to as the general, Father Andrés de la Asunción, referred to as the *comisario* and ten soldiers armed with an arquebus, forerunner of the musket. On this day, he recorded that they came upon the Carmel River.

Various sources claim different origins of the river's naming. Vizcaíno's diary doesn't name the river, rather that the party had heard of “a copious stream that ran into the sea and of another good headland.”

(See River on page 6)

A MESSAGE FROM CVHS PRESIDENT KIM WILLIAMS

Coming up on **April 27 is our Annual Meeting** when we will review the many accomplishments of the past year, look at the financial status of the Society (healthy!), listen to a talk by Jeff Ohlson, enjoy some light refreshments and reconnect with old friend and make some new ones.

We'll be thanking Elizabeth Barratt and Gary Tate who have completed their terms as board members. We will vote on the nominees for three year terms: Jeff Ohlson (continuing), Robin Sutherlin (returning). You can see their bios below.

It's hard to believe that this starts the 11th year (the 41st edition) that I have had the privilege of serving as the production editor of The Historian. I am extremely grateful to all the writers who so faithfully have provided great content— mostly Elizabeth Barratt and Jeff Ohlson. Jeff Ohlson has also been our principal photographer. And of course, we could not do without hawk-eyed proofreaders Christine Williams and Cherie Ohlson.

While I really enjoy putting the newsletter together, it's time for me to step aside and give someone else the opportunity to produce The Historian. If you are interested in volunteering, drop me an email at CVHSPresident@gmail.com.



Kim Williams

Robin Sutherlin: Past board member, nominated for a new three-year term



Born in Ohio, Robin attended Miami University and UC Berkeley majoring in Russian literature and language. After working for the nonprofit Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center in Santa Cruz, she moved to Carmel and then to Carmel Valley Village 23 years ago. She has served as a docent at Garland Ranch Regional Park, at Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, and also served on the Board of Directors of the Carmel Valley Association and Carmel Valley Art Association. Her hobbies include hiking, birding, dogs, gardening, reading, and spending time with her children and grandchildren. Robin became a CVHS docent in 2021 and joined the CVHS Board in April 2022.

Jeff Ohlson: Current board member, nominated for a new three-year term



Jeff was born and raised in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. In 1966 he graduated from the University of Minnesota with a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Engineering. He then worked for Boeing in its Commercial Airplane Flight Deck Design and Flight Crew Operations departments until retiring in 2004. Jeff first volunteered for the Historical Society in 2012 and is currently serving a third term on the Board. As a CVHS Historian, he has authored over a dozen diverse histories on Carmel Valley. He has also curated several exhibits, serves as a docent, and is responsible for the Society's website and History Center's facility and maintenance work. Jeff also is a regular contributor to the Society's Historian newsletter and gives talks on Carmel Valley history at various local venues. In 2022, he received the Community's *Good Egg Award*. Jeff and his wife

Cherie now live in the Carmel Valley Village area. He enjoys woodworking, photography, and maintaining and showing his 1960s classic cars.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

(Nov, Dec, Jan)

General Fund: Lynn & John Archer, Pam Austin, Jane Chaney, Jim Costello, Steven & Leslie Dorrance, Ellsworth Gregory, Chris Harrold, Reggie Jones, Dennis & Elizabeth Kerr, Stewart McKenzie, Luc Messier & Julia Fette, Sharon Miller & Max Firstman, M.J. Murphy, Peter Neumeier, Tom Oliver, Craig & Julie Painter, Val & Jar Pakis, Ken Poppovich, Nancy Porter, Hagen Pyser, David & Wendy Simpson, Sharon Simpson, Suzanne Taunt, Dan & Shelley Weiss, Richard Wheat, John Williams, Kim & Christine Williams

Grants: Community Foundation for Monterey County, Talbott Family Foundation, The Yellow Brick Road Benefit Shop

Tiles: Peter & Lois Dew, Scott & Jana McKenzie

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

DOCUMENTS, PHOTOS, ARTIFACTS, ETC.

(Nov, Dec, Jan)

Pam Austin: 1993 *Carmel Valley Sun* supplement *Holiday Songbook*, featuring ads from many local businesses

Marge Ingram Viales: Vintage business cards: Carmel Valley Village Golf Shop, Randazzo Fund; Robles del Rio Water Company annual meeting notes and financial report for December 4, 1986; newspaper: Carmel Valley News-May 1, 1948

Fawn Nicholsen Remington: Commemorative T-shirt from 1990 C.V. Fiesta, featuring Hank Ketcham's cartoon Rosie's Cracker Barrel; various photos, newspaper clippings and other ephemera pertaining to the 1989 Centennial Celebration; packet of "CVHS" cocktail napkins with a sepia toned George Seidenek photo "The Old Milk House, circa 1940"

Kim Williams: 3 copies Carmel Valley Centennial souvenir programs

March is Women's History Month—See Story on Pages 4 and 5



A Field Trip to the Museum

CVHS Board Member and Museum Docent, Jane Chaney (back right, in black) recently welcomed a group of visitors from **The Cottages of Carmel**.

If your organization would like to schedule a special visit, give us a holler.

Carmel Valley's Red Cross Unit The Muriel Vanderbilt Phelps Story

by Jeff Ohlson, CVHS Historian

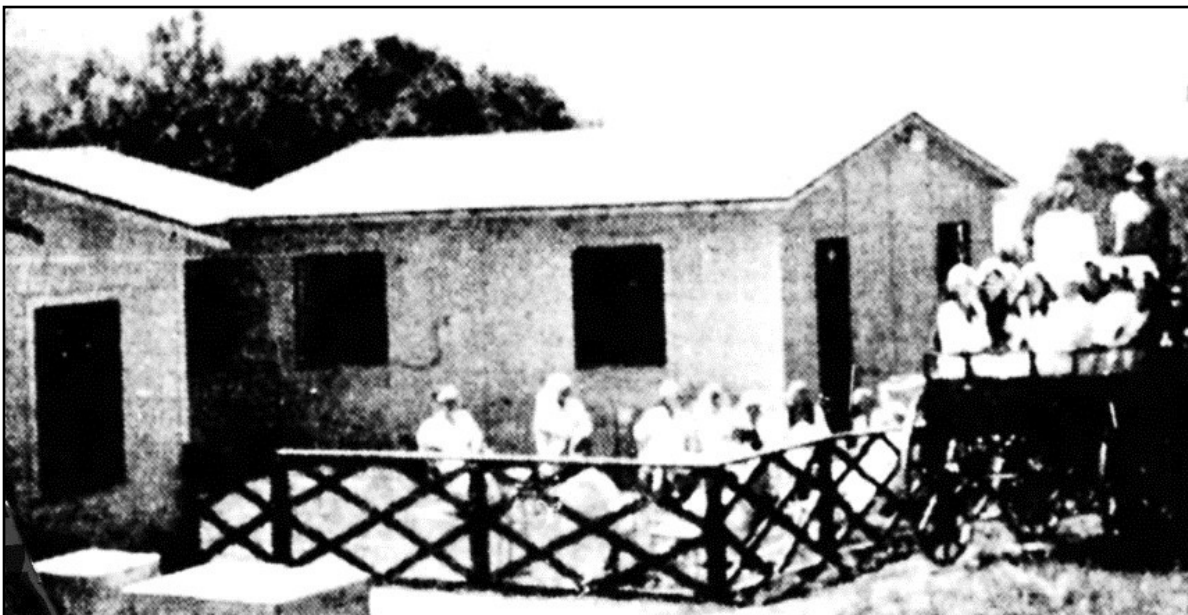


From the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s Muriel Vanderbilt Phelps was owner of the famous Los Laureles Ranch of Carmel Valley. Granddaughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt and heiress to the Vanderbilt and Comstock Lode fortunes, she was one of the wealthiest women in

the U.S. She was also a well-known socialite, thoroughbred horse breeder, and philanthropist.

A well-known horsewoman, she raced her horses at tracks all around California as well as at the Kentucky Derby - her only entry in the Derby, *Grandpere*, finished 5th to winner Citation in 1948. Well involved in the local horse scene of Carmel Valley and beyond, she also served as a judge and honorary director of the Salinas California Rodeo.

Long before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Muriel was also very much involved in Monterey County's relief work and was chairperson of Carmel Valley's Red Cross Unit located on her Los Laureles Ranch. In 1940 she built a one-room building for her American Red Cross Carmel Valley Chapter that was eventually increased to four rooms. It sat on the knoll behind what today is the Los Laureles Lodge's hotel office.



The original 1940 Red Cross Unit building

The unit contained a complete operating room, a classroom for Red Cross training, and a surgical dressing assembly room. Muriel's father, W. K. Vanderbilt II, provided a commissary and other equipment and furnishings. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Unit's workers shipped 170,000 surgical dressings overseas – the largest number of bandages shipped from a unit of this size in the entire nation. A plus for its volunteers was that they overlooked a scenic Carmel River and the Santa Lucia Mountain range beyond.

Volunteers were recruited from all around the area to work in the Surgical Dressing Unit where they wore special uniforms while working in its clean room. About 100 volunteers worked there.

Muriel Vanderbilt Phelps' achievements are indelibly written onto the pages of Carmel Valley history. The accomplishments of her American Red Cross Unit on her Los Laureles Ranch were truly remarkable. In 1946, Muriel (then Mrs. John Payson Adams) sold her 1100-acre Los Laureles Ranch to Frank & Paul Porter.

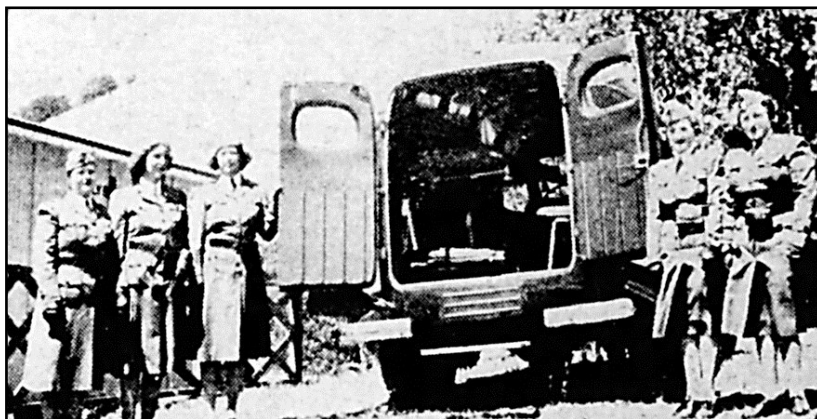
At the age of 71, Muriel Vanderbilt Church Phelps Adams passed away in Florida in 1972. 🏠



The original 1940 Red Cross Unit building as it looks today after being changed into guest quarters at Los Laureles Lodge.



Surgical dressing workers shown in this photo made many thousands of surgical dressings, each inspected to meet rigorous Red Cross standards before shipping around the world to war-torn countries in Europe and Asia.



An ambulance crew ready to go at a moment's notice. Volunteers had extensive training in field work. The ambulance was styled after U.S. Army equipment, and was stocked with all supplies necessary for any emergency.



Due to Japan's control of Southeast Asia's natural rubber production in WWII, there was rubber rationing in the U.S. To support this rationing, Carmel Valley Red Cross Unit volunteers were transported to work in the horse drawn wagon shown below.

(River from page 1) Upon arrival, they “discovered another good port into which entered a copious river descending from high, snow-covered mountains with large pines, white and black poplars, and willows.”

After a brief area survey, the men set sail at midnight from Monterey Bay headed toward Mendocino. A storm blew the ships north towards southern Oregon before they finally turned south, arriving in Acapulco on March 21, 1603.

Cartographer Francisco de Bolaños accompanied the voyage. In his 1602-03 course log, *Derrotero cierto y berdadero para navegar desde Mendocino hasta el Puerto de Acapulco por la costa del Mar del Sur*, (Certain and True Course to Navigate from Mendocino to the Port of Acapulco along the coast of the South Sea), he referred to the river entrance and its surroundings, calling it “*El Rio del Carmelo*.” He did not note who named it.

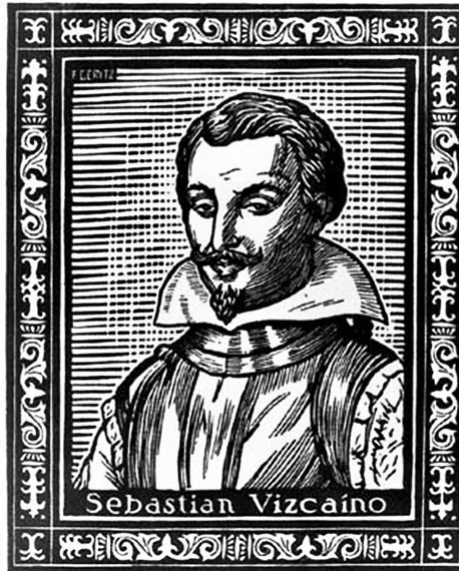
In 1615, in Volume 2, Book 5 of *Monarquía Indiana* (Indian Monarchy), chronicler and historian Fray Juan de Torquemada, who was not on the expedition but referenced original documents, wrote, “Four leagues further on, a river enters the sea, through some rocks, coming down from some high, white mountains, the entire banks of which are full of white and black poplars, willows, brambles, and other groves of Spain; *This river was called Carmel*.” Again, no mention of how the river got its name.

In 1620, Fray Antonio de la Ascensión, a cosmographer and one of the three Carmelite friars on the Vizcaino voyage, published his diary. Vizcaino’s journal doesn’t list him with the party that found the river, but the friar described the scene, without saying who named it. He noted that there were “black poplars on the banks of a river that nearby enters the sea *and was named the Carmelo*.”

One hundred thirty-one years later, José González Cabrera Bueno, in 1734 published *Navegación Especulativa y Práctica* (Speculative and Practical Navigation). He speculated, “Following the coast from Punta de Pinos to the south-east part of it, there is another famous

harbor which runs from north to south, and has shelter from all winds, and has a river of very good water and shallow...and *I call it the River of Carmel because the Religious of this Order discovered it*.”

Hubert Howe Bancroft’s 1884 *History of California, Vol. I*, conjectures, “...a river flowing from lofty hills enters the ocean with fertile and well wooded banks between the shore cliffs. *It was named for three Carmelite friars who accompanied the expedition*.” (a footnote states, “Not shown on the [Vizcaino’s] map.”)



In 1916, Herbert Eugene Bolton, editor of *Original Narratives of Early American History* keeps it simple, “*The Carmel River was given the name by the Vizcaino expedition*.”

James Culleton’s 1950 volume, *Indians and Pioneers of Old Monterey*, says, “*To honor the friars Vizcaino named it Rio de Carmelo*. Since it is not shown on their charts it may not have been seen till they made the inland trip January 3, 1603.” And again: “By Friday January 3...the general ...in company with Father Andrés and ten aquebusiers, went inland towards the southeast to

have a better idea of the place, its people, and its animals. About three leagues from the camp, they discovered another port. A copious river descending from high snow-covered mountains flowed into it. *This is Carmel River and Bay*.”

In 1966, Henry R. Wagner in *Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America in the Sixteenth Century*, claims in a footnote, “*The river was named after Nuestra Señora del Carmelo, the patron of the Carmelites*.”

Donald Clark’s 1991 *Monterey County Place Names* does not cite Sebastián Vizcaino’s journal. Instead, he quotes Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez’s 1922 volume, *Spanish and Indian Place names of California: Their Meaning and Their Romance*, in which she notes the river’s discovery in 1602 and not 1603, and then misquotes Vizcaino’s original journal by adding that “*It was called El Rio de Carmelo because the friars of this order discovered it*.”

Ray March, in his 2012 *River in Ruin* states,

(Continued next page)

MONTEREY COUNTY.

THE GARDEN SPOT OF THE STATE.

Its Location, Resources, Etc.—Advantages as a Place of Residence, and for
the Investment of Money.

As you travel to the south for one and a half or two miles the beautiful Carmel valley presents itself with all the grandeur that nature can bestow. Way up into the Santa Lucia mountains you may trace the clear waters of the Carmel river, which finds its winding way through the valley into the bay bearing the same name. Now it passes through a thicket of sycamores, now through a thicket of willows and poplars, bouncing over some steep precipice, gliding over some sandy shallow, rushing over some rocky rapid. Part the twigs that are kissing the cool waters of this stream, and there you will find the handsomest of the speckled beauty tribe. The following poem may give a faint idea of this stream re-

Every few miles you may find the country schoolhouse, attended by scores of little urchins, who impress the visitor with the equality which our government guarantees to its citizens, showing at the same time that our public system of education is carried to nearly perfection in this country.

When one becomes tired of continuing on his southern journey, if he does not wish to take the offers of our generous farmers, he may listen to those that Mother Earth offers him within her ethereal canopy. A single saddle-blanket is sufficient covering the year round—except in the rainy season—and one will not feel discomfort for want of covering. The cool waters of those streams rushing down the

“The Carmel”

As it does Valleyites today, the Carmel River’s meanderings fascinated the early settlers of the 19th Century. Over the last century there have been several poems written to eulogize the river. The following poem was found in the Sunday morning August 23, 1891 Salinas Daily Journal newspaper in an article entitled “Monterey County, The Garden Spot of the State”.

A quote from the article introduced the poem in this way: **“The following poem may give a faint idea of this stream regarded as landscape.”**

Listen to the rippling water run,
Singing as she glides along;
Now a rill and now a patter
Chants in one harmonious song.

List again and thou shalt hear
Voices from its rocky bed.
Which rejoice since thou art near
To rehearse what they have said.

Nature, grand in all her gran’eur,
Lies enchanted at our feet,
While the muses of that gran’eur
Form the song which I repeat.

Wa’k along these spreading bowers,
Kneel beside my busy falls,
When thou shalt perceive the flowers
Nature paints along my walls.

Then, again, in some deep eddy,
Where a stream is falling high,
Thou mayst listen to a steady,
Yes, a steady, mournful sigh.

Yet, ‘tis not because these verses,
Shouldst thou think I’m ever sad,
For my song as oft reverses,
As the days that I have clad.

Tumbling, rumbling, goes my current,
Laughing, shouting, on its way,
As she forms a bustling torrent,
O’er some rocky rapid gay.

Now she slides beneath some shadow,
Now beneath some bending low,
Rippling o’er some sandy shallow,
Leaping over some noisy brow.

Then she forms a perfect mirror,
‘Neath some weeping willow’s shade,
Where she seeks if any error
Blurs the robe which she has made.

Yet, ‘tis not alone she muses
O’er the beauty of this scene,
For our sylvan god refuses
Not to grant its evergreen.

Oaks and ferns around her borders,
Stately pines and poplars gay
Are the grand, majestic wanders
Along her winding way.

Agas past have borne this splendor,
With its rich, enchanting vail,
While the coming days shall render
More sublime this sunny vale.

(Continued from previous page)

“Vizcaíno and a small contingent, including the three Carmelite friars, hike southward over the hill from Monterey Bay... *Vizcaíno asks the friars to give the river a name and they call it El Rio de Carmelo in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, their patron saint.*”

At last, we come to Barbara and Rudy Marinacci’s 1980 volume, California’s Spanish Place-Names: What They Mean and How They Got There, in which, 377 years after the river’s discovery, and found nowhere else, they claim *“They conducted a Mass there.”*

So, over the centuries we have the continuing conundrum: it appears to be a mystery exactly who named the *Rio de Carmelo*, known in our day as the Carmel River.

In the end, despite Vizcaíno’s groundbreaking voyage and numerous discoveries along the California coast in 1602-03, upon return to Mexico he stumbled over the inevitable government bureaucracy. As a result, the region sat unexplored and unpopulated for another 167 years. Finally, in 1770, Gaspar de Portolá rediscovered Monterey Bay and the Carmel River, once again reclaiming the region for Spain. 🏠

Carmel Valley Historical Society



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History Center Museum

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Upcoming Event

Carmel Valley Historical Society's Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 27, 2024 - 4:00-6:00 PM - at the History Center

Elect board members, look back at last year's accomplishments, review the financial statement, hear a talk by Jeff Ohlson on *Carmel Valley's Red Cross Unit – the Muriel Vanderbilt Phelps Story*, and enjoy light refreshments and friends.

10th Anniversary & Christmas Party

