



# Francisco Palou's Life and Apostolic Labors of the Venerable Father Junípero Serra: Founder of the Franciscan Missions of California (Classic Reprint)

*George Wharton James*

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Excerpt from Francisco Palou's Life and Apostolic Labors of the Venerable Father Junípero Serra: Founder of the Franciscan Missions of California

Though Palou's "Life and Apostolic Labors of the Venerable Father Fray Junipero Serra" is the first work dealing with the history of Alta California; and though it was originally published in the City of Mexico in 1787, it has never yet been translated for English readers. A few chapters with snatches here and there from the original were done into English and issued by the Reverend Father Adam, Vicar General of the Diocese of Monterey and Los Angeles, in the year 1890, but its inadequacy was an irritant and a source of annoyance.

Does it require any lengthened argument to show that such a lack in the literature of the Golden State does not recommend us to the good opinion of outsiders? To have the very first book upon which our knowledge of the history of the state depends inaccessible to all save a few Spanish scholars reveals a lack of state pride and self-respect and a personal indifference that are unbecoming a great state and its progressive people. This would be so even were the character of the "history-maker" one that neither commanded veneration or respect. But when, as in the case of so noble and Godlike a man as Padre Junipero Serra, people of all classes, parties, and religious beliefs acclaim him one of the noblest, purest, most self-sacrificing, devoted, humble. Apostolic and Christlike of men, the careless indifference of the educators, religious leaders and teachers, and scholars of the State borders upon the reprehensible.

It seems peculiarly appropriate, therefore, that in this year of our Lord 1913, two hundred years after this His Devoted Servant, Junipero Serra, first saw the light, that a translation of his Life and Labors should be published. For thirty years I have waited, hoping that some competent pen would undertake the work. Father Zephyrin Englehardt, the Official Historian of the Franciscan Order in California, was the man who most properly should have done it, as his great familiarity both with the Spanish language and with the life of his fellow-Franciscan, - whose memory and Apostolic labors he reveres, - eminently fitted him for the task. But his exhaustive studies and work upon the monumental history of the Missions and Missionaries of California, Lower as well as Upper, not yet being completed, he was compelled to forego the pleasure.

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