

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by
The Monterey History and Art Association

VOLUME III, NUMBER 3

SEPTEMBER, 1959

Mr. Colton's Dark Hour

As a diarist, Walter Colton leaves little to be desired. His notes concerning his novel adventures as the first American judge and civil authority of newly-conquered California make engrossing reading today. The pages of his famous *Three Years in California* are redolent of urbane wit, good humour, common sense and sympathy for his California flock.

The everyday incidents of 1846 Monterey must have included some misadventures, too, but in the diary the sunny hours are recorded with a loving hand and the infrequent periods when the dismal clouds of humiliation and failure covered the clear blue skies are either ignored or softly turned off with wry humor. Colton could take a jest in good spirit; he was not above playing one or two in return, but he was a gentleman and a minister of the Gospel. He never overstepped the limits of genial good taste.

In this respect the new alcalde's Monter-
eños offered few problems. They did have their domestic squabbles, and they might be somewhat free with their knives when heated with wine at a fandango, or they might not clearly recognize the fine line between "thine" and "mine" when it came to horses, cattle or small objects, but in whatever they did there was a naivete, a sort of childish unpremeditation that removed much of the sense of criminality. If the Reverend Walter Colton had had only his Spanish-Californians to deal with, his role as chief magistrate would have presented no great anxiety. Of course, he could not speak Spanish, which was unfortunate, and he was the Protestant chaplain of the invading American naval forces, which in a community ninety-nine percent Roman Catholic, was rife with possibilities for mutual misunderstandings. But the people were so easy-going, the invaders so firmly in power,



REVEREND WALTER COLTON

Courtesy Monterey Public Library

the situation so novel and Mr. Colton so gentle and willing to make allowances, that life flowed on undisturbed in the sleepy adobe town.

That is to say—it generally did. There were nettles in this rustic Eden, and the prickliest were the frontiersmen, vagabonds and recent immigrants who had volunteered to help capture California. The collapse of Mexican rule had been so rapid and complete that within a few months, without having fought a battle, this rough, undisciplined crew had been thanked, paid and mustered out of service. They hung around the towns, guzzling the local firewater, ogling the señoritas, quarreling among themselves, and bragging loudly of their natural superiority over any one of darker complexion. They owed allegiance to no man; they were touchy, generally “enlivened by liquor,” and ready for any practical joke. And the rougher, the better.

Colton had a hard time keeping them in order. Falling afoul of them one night, the alcalde suffered unheard-of humiliation. No wonder he did not enter it in his description of his stay in California. But others were watching, and others remembered. In 1877, old Don Florencio Serrano, whose home is being restored to serve as the headquarters and clubhouse of the Monterey History and Art Association, recalled the disgraceful incident for the benefit of Thomas Savage, one of the stenographer-assistants of California’s greatest historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft. (Serrano’s valuable reminiscences have never been translated, but there is now on foot a plan to publish them for the benefit of the restoration fund of the Casa Serrano.)

Blind old Don Florencio declared that Commodore Stockton, who had relieved Commodore Sloat on July 23, 1846, asked all the Mexican civil authorities to remain in office, “but all of them were of the opinion that they should not continue to exercise their functions, since under the existing state of war, civil laws were no longer operative and the country was subject to martial law.

“Having learned that the civil authorities refused to continue in their offices, and not desiring the public peace to be interrupted, (Stockton) found it necessary to send ashore the Protestant chaplain, Mr. Walter Colton, so that he might act as the sole magistrate and maintain order, restrain the excesses of the wicked, and administer justice in the cases that might come before him. All the people watched this maneuver in silence, and Mr. Colton was established as the *de facto* civil authority and acted as the sole magistrate until the middle of October, 1848.

“Mr. Colton found himself greatly embarrassed in carrying out the demands of his office, which piled up on him because he did not possess a knowledge of the Spanish language; and in order to overcome this great difficulty, he named as his secretary William Garner, a long-time resident of the country who had become a Mexican citizen and married a daughter of California. He was intimately acquainted with the local situation and spoke Spanish perfectly.

“I must confess that Mr. Colton, with his fine intelligence and his practical experience of public life, kept the peace and administered justice with perfect orderliness. I, personally, am well aware of the difficult position in which Mr. Colton found himself, for I remember a public scandal that took place one night in a place where liquors were sold and in which only American volunteers who had served their terms and been released from the service were accustomed to gather.

“The scandal occurred in this manner: There were a great number of Americans together at this saloon. Although they were not entirely drunk, they had taken aboard a good deal of liquor, and they were causing a real uproar with their shouts and quarrelling. Mr. Colton chanced to pass that way, and seeing such a disorder, he entered into the saloon to quiet them, thinking that they would respect him in his capacity as magistrate, since he was carrying his staff of office with its black tassels. But it all turned out exactly the opposite.

“Those men, low and common in character and excited by drink, what they did

was to throng about him, begin to dance mockingly around him, and even dared to throw handfuls of flour upon his clothing and stick pieces of spittle-wetted paper on his back!

"Fortunately, the Californians who, from the street, witnessed the affair (which was something unheard of as far as they were concerned) ran immediately to tell Garner, and he, together with some other American gentlemen, entered the saloon and freed Mr. Colton from the insults and jeers of those devil-possessed men."¹

Not the least interesting part of this sudden illumination of life in Monterey in 1846 is the horror and consternation explicit in Serrano's recollection of the sacrilege offered to the alcalde's staff. Carrying this wand of office, the magistrate, in Spanish eyes, was more than a man; he was Law itself. To insult the *baston de mando* was to challenge, not the officer, but the whole history of civilization, to set at naught man's age-long struggle for order, peace and security. As Serrano says, such an act was incomprehensible to the Californians. Colton himself cites the power of the wand for in his campaign against gambling, he had but to place it on the table, and "no one rescued a dollar after my cane, with its alcalde insignia, had been laid on the boards."

The staff, or walking stick, to which so much importance was attached is still with us. It is preserved in the notable collection of Californiana of Mrs. W. R. Holman, one of the directors of the Association. It is 34½ inches from tip to tip, shod with a worn brass ferrule, and having for a handle a carved piece of ivory shaped to a simple pistol grip. The 4½ inches of ivory may be walrus tusk, and the carved design is a blank scroll or shield, resting on three leaves in whose center are three berries or blossoms. It appears that jewels were once set in the berries. Just below the escutcheon a gold finger ring (from which the jewel is missing) encircles the ivory, and joining the ivory to the red-stained maplewood (?) staff is a one-inch uninscribed silver band.

The black tassels have disappeared long since, but the wood is polished smooth and the coloring worn off for eight or nine inches below the silver band by the pressure of now-forgotten alcaldes' hands.

—DONALD M. CRAIG

How To Become A Millionaire . . . Monterey, 1846

(Continued from the June issue)

The alluring accounts that appeared in the *New York Journal of Commerce* in 1847 telling of the astounding opportunities for health, wealth and independence in California were the work of a one-man Chamber of Commerce in Monterey. William R. Garner, an Englishman who had slipped ashore from a whaler at Santa Barbara in 1824 and had become a Mexican citizen, was determined to have the United States take permanent possession of California. A mere temporary military occupation of this Mexican territory would, in his eyes, be one of history's tragic blunders, and since there were less than a thousand Americans, including the military forces, in California when he was writing, he was doing what he could to increase immigration and make it impossible for the country to revert to Mexico.

His encouragement to prospective settlers cannot have fallen on unreceptive ears. The fantastic rewards for honest sweat in California must have seemed incredible to the ordinary workman or farmhand in the United States. The nation had not yet recovered from the frightful depression of 1837. In 1840 unskilled laborers received 75¢ a day in the cities; in the country, the hired man got board and room and sometimes 50¢. Skilled mechanics and carpenters could count on \$1.50 a day

¹ Serrano ms. *Apuntes Para la Historia de California*, 117, 119, courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California.



CALIFORNIANS LASSOING CATTLE — BEECHHEY'S NARRATIVE, 1831

Courtesy Monterey Public Library

in 1844 for working eleven and a half hours in winter and two hours longer in summer. Weavers made \$5 a week in 1854.

Women were miserably paid. For twelve to fourteen hours of skilled labor in the garment trade in New York in 1845, they received 25¢. The brightest spot in industrial America in 1854, upon which all visitors marvelled was the model weaving mill at Lowell, Massachusetts, where women could earn up to \$3.50 a week and pay only \$6.00 a month for board and room in the management's dormitory.

Prices, on the contrary, were relatively high. Board in the New York hotels of 1854 cost about \$1.50 a week; a glass of whiskey cost 6¢.

On to California!

—D. M. C.

Monterey (California) Nov. 12, 1846

Tradesmen of all kinds are very much wanted in this country, and I would strongly recommend a large number of them to emigrate here, for here there are next to none; and those who are here, are mostly given to drunkenness—or if not, they invariably, after having been a short time in the country, desert their trades and go to farming or speculating.

A tailor will charge twenty-four dollars for making a plain frock coat, and finding trimmings; five dollars for the plainest kind of pants, and everything else in proportion. A blacksmith (or a substitute for a blacksmith) will not work here unless he can make six to ten dollars per day, and even then, it often happens that the person who wants a job done has to wait until some man who knows how to strike a blow with the hammer has time to get sober or be in the humor to go to work. There was a wharf partly built in Monterey last year, and a crane put on it for hoisting bales, boxes, etc. An iron band was required to go 'round the cap in which the crane swung. There were then four blacksmiths in Monterey, and he who was considered the best workman was engaged to weld this iron band, which consisted of a piece of flat bar iron six feet long, four inches and a half wide and

three-quarters of an inch thick. On asking the blacksmith what he charged to weld that band and put it on the cap, he said six dollars per day, which was agreed upon. The job took the man six days to finish it.

I mention these incidents that your readers may plainly see the lack there is in this country of people who understand their trades and the opportunity it offers for their pecuniary advancement. There are some few carpenters in the country but they will not work a day's work. I have known some of them to make twelve dollars each day when they thought proper to work. For instance, they charge eighteen dollars for making a panel door of the most ordinary kind, and of red wood, which is remarkably easily worked, and the same price for a pair of common shutters, made of the same wood. For making window sashes—fifty cents for each pane the sash contains, and four dollars per square for laying a floor, if of red wood, and six dollars if of pine.

I could mention hundreds of instances of the same kind in all the various branches of trade; but let it suffice to say, that any tradesman, particularly one who is master of his business, who has a wish to emigrate to California, ought to do it without the least hesitation. There is no use in any man asking if such and such a trade will be advantageous to him in California, because no trade can be mentioned that is required in a civilized country, which is not requisite in California.

If a watch-chain should happen to be broken, the watch must be sent to the Sandwich Islands (*Hawaii*) to be repaired, and the owner must wait six or nine months for his watch, and more than likely, when he gets it, it will be spoiled for ever.

Nov. 13, 1846—Having obtained a piece of quicksilver ore, I send it to you, as a specimen of one of the quicksilver mines now in operation in the northern part of upper California. This mine is very rich, as you will perceive by the piece of ore I send you, which is by no means a selected piece, as it was the first I took hold of from a box full. All the stone contains quicksilver, but the richest parts are the red streaks which the stone contains. The experiment may be tried in the following manner. Take a piece of the stone and beat it up very fine. Then take a piece of iron that is flat, the blade of a shovel for instance, and make it red hot. Then put the pounded ore on the shovel, and cover it over with a tea cup. The vapor will adhere to the cup, and with the finger this vapor may be gathered, when the quicksilver will be found by putting a piece of silver coin in the cup, or with the finger scraping the soot out of the cup upon a piece of silver.

But the best method is, to take a gun barrel and fill it with the ore beaten into pieces about the size of a small pea; keep the breech end of the gun barrel in the fire and let the other end be immersed in a tub of water—keeping a plate or basin in the water for the quicksilver to fall into, and likewise for the purpose of keeping it clean.

The quicksilver ore from this mine is procured with the greatest imaginable facility. You will perceive that the stone is easily broken, and from this you will form a pretty just calculation of the quantity of ore that may be procured in a day, either by one man or a hundred.

Notwithstanding the facility with which this mine may be worked, the owners of it have not as yet procured above two thousand dollars worth of the metal, owing to their slothfulness and ignorance of everything like labor. As this mine has never yet been properly explored, it is not known how far it may extend.

Nature has been bountiful to this country in many wonderful ways, but her goodness has been disregarded by those who have held possession of it for so long a time. The reproductiveness of the animals in this country is extraordinary; but indolence, carelessness and the love of luxury have within the last twelve years brought it almost into a state of desolation.

A farmer in California who may have, for instance, three thousand cows, considers that he ought to brand and mark during the season one thousand calves, allowing two-thirds of the number he ought to brand to be eaten by the wolves and foxes, which are constantly preying upon them. They lie about, waiting for a cow to calve, when they immediately destroy the offspring. All the farmers are aware of this, still they take no steps to prevent it; except that about once in two or three years some of them will procure poison and mix it with the flesh of a dead horse or bullock and scatter it about the farm. They generally fix it in such a manner that it is certain death to any animal that eats of it.

What I have said above concerning a farmer's branding only one third as many calves as he has cows, is a general and established rule amongst all the farmers in this country and many of them do not reach that number.

February 19, 1847—There is not perhaps in the world another country or climate so well adapted to the breeding of sheep as Upper California. The reproduction of this most useful animal and the facility with which it is reared here may appear almost incredible to those who have not witnessed what every person who has resided in this country a few years knows to be the fact.

A ewe in this country never exceeds a year old without breeding, and at the expiration of every six months, or within that time, she will be seen with a new breed, and oftener with two lambs at a birth; though amongst the natives the latter is not considered profitable, because when a sheep has two lambs, she is more likely to lose them both than she would be to lose one if she had no other to look after. I have frequently seen a sheep have three lambs at a birth, but never knew a single example of the dam having reared the three lambs thus born.

The wool produced in this country is not of the finest quality, neither is it by many degrees the most inferior, but there is great room for improving the quality, and it can doubtless be done to a considerable extent. In almost every large flock of sheep in California may be seen four or five different qualities of wool, from very fine to very coarse. The cause of this is carelessness and inattention on the part of the owners, many of whom allow goats to run with the sheep. Thus the goat coupling with the sheep spoils the wool of the breed of all such sheep, and in a very little time becomes coarse and hairy.

Sheep are not subject to any disease whatever in California. Although I have known them, when the Missions were in their opulence, to run in droves of from ten to fifteen thousand, I never either saw or heard tell of one solitary instance of any malignant disease ever having been observed among them. There is no necessity here for washing and salving sheep. In short, there is little or no expense whatever attending them. A farmer who is the owner of eight or ten thousand sheep will get an Indian boy, generally wild from the mountains; this boy will be sent out with the sheep about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, and the sheep are permitted to graze till about four or five in the afternoon, when they are brought home and shut up in a pen formed of a few oak bushes thinly scattered round a piece of ground sufficient to contain them. In the winter time this spot is nothing but a complete mud-hole, and every lamb that happens to be brought forth in this spot invariably perishes almost as soon as it is born.

(To be continued)

—W. R. G.

A Special Report of the Treasurer

Mrs. Isabel Tostevin, the treasurer of the Monterey History and Art Association, has given the membership, at the request of the directors, a Statement of Income and Expenses from January 1 to August 31, 1959. The gross income was \$5,668.20, and the expenses \$5,052.31, netting the Association \$615.89 for the period.

A good many of the items listed under Expense are actually expenditures for permanent assets of the Association. For example, beginning the restoration of the Serrano Adobe cost \$457.52, furniture and art purchases cost \$627.72 (largely a women's club gift in honor of Mrs. William O'Donnell), purchase of post-cards which are later sold for the support of the Association, \$1,316.65, \$532.28 for the quarterly *Noticias*, and a necessary expenditure for the Merienda and First Theatre party of \$1,240.47. (The Merienda actually returned a profit of \$450.) Interest on the loan came to \$150 and insurance on the Association's property and valuable relics and art came to \$243.22.

Expenses connected with membership meetings, board meetings, mailing and office outlay came to \$385.73. Expenses of organized tours were \$50.17 (we took in \$77.25)). The dues we pay to belong to historical associations amounted to \$25.00.

Mrs. Marje Eliassen's idea for the sale of Colton Hall lavender sachets, although costing \$18.25 for cloth, brought in \$103.25, the postcards, a steady source of income through the years, added \$545.20, the sale of tour books to the visitors to our historic spots accounted for \$253.50. The special gift to Mrs. William O'Donnell from the women's club was \$606.00, and the membership dues totalled \$2,323.00.

No officer, member or director received any money for his service to the Association; the un-ending secretarial work of Mrs. O'Donnell, the shorthand notes and transcriptions of Mrs. Raynsford, the expert accounting of Mrs. Tostevin, the constant attention of Mr. Faw to the restoration work on the Casa Serrano, the valuable legal service of our attorney directors, notably that of Carmel Martin, Sr., and all other efforts by our members are contributions made to further the ideals of the Association: the preservation of the historical heritage of *The Old Pacific Capitol*, Monterey.

PK/UP COSAS HED.....

New members of Monterey History and Art Association, Ltd., since the publication of the June issue of *Noticias del Puerto de Monterey* are Dr. Robert J. Oberfohren, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Velissaratos, Mrs. Allen Sproul, Miss Agnes Sprague, Mrs. Marie E. Davies, Miss Marian Eley, Mrs. W. C. McClelland, Mr. and Mrs. William Curtis, Mrs. E. B. Coyle, Captain and Mrs. William E. Oberholtzer, Mr. and Mrs. George R. Walker, Mr. and Mrs. John W. Shephard, Mr. and Mrs. Orval H. Polk and Vice Admiral and Mrs. Ira E. Hobbs. Junior Members: Mary Alice Lee and Patrick Hayes Lee. We now have 591 members and 26 junior members. Twenty are life members.

Miss Charlton Fortune presented the Association with a painting done by her in 1920 from the end of Tyler street, entitled *Old Monterey*. Miss Fortune lived for many years in Monterey and is known as one of the best artists of that period. Mrs. Armin Hansen has given a number of Mr. Hansen's etchings. Mrs. Jessie Knutt of Pacific Grove has given a beautiful old doll of the 1890's which is now in the Stevenson House, as well as a number of other gifts.

Mrs. Esther Nichols of Carmel has given to the Association an antique bedspread, an unusual musical instrument and a number of pieces of old glass. Mrs. W. R. Holman presented Volume 6 of *The Larkin Papers* and an old book entitled *Familiar Chats with Queens of the Stage*. To the Stevenson House Mrs. Holman gave bound copies of the 1888-1893 *Scribner's Magazine* and the *Review of Reviews* for 1895, both containing articles on Stevenson.

The Monterey History and Art Association were co-hosts with the Monterey County Bar Association in plans and entertainment for the California Supreme Court session in Colton Hall on September 1st and 2nd, honoring the 110th anniversary of the drafting and signing of the California Constitution in Colton Hall, Monterey, September 1-15, 1849.

The justices of the California Supreme Court heard pleadings by attorneys on eight cases on their docket while in Monterey.

Although the Association was co-host in the celebration, no funds of the Association were expended in the process; all monies are ear-marked for restoration and absolutely essential Association business.

Mrs. Hugh Dormody gave the Association, as a memento of her husband, a mayor of Monterey, a copy of his 1944 *Report on the Military and Economic Advantages of Further Development at Monterey Harbor*. She also donated some interesting photos of Monterey in the '90's.

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MONTEREY HISTORY
AND ART ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 1169
Monterey, California

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HONORARY DIRECTORS: Miss Margaret Jacks, Carmel Martin, Sr.

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

Mrs. Helen H. Haber, a distinguished benefactress of the Association whose long-term loan of money has made possible the acquisition of the Serrano Adobe for the Association's permanent headquarters, was elected to the Board of Directors at the September special meeting. She will fill the seat on the Board made vacant by the naming of Miss Margaret Jacks to an Honorary Directorship. We are very happy to welcome Mrs. Haber to the Board.

Speaking of the Board of Directors, an indication of how seriously they take their duties is given by the fact that 25 out of 30 were present at the September meeting in the Serrano Adobe. Perhaps the fact that the restoration of the old adobe is straining our resources to the utmost is the cause. Claude Faw, in charge of the work, has had a number of problems to face, including childish vandalism. The breaking of windows may be childish, but it is also expensive (insurance will help pay for it) and the board approved the erection of a woven wire fence at the rear of the property.

After checking bids from contractors, Mr. Faw presented the figures and the directors awarded a contract to repair the roof and \$40 for each rafter to be replaced. This will more than empty the treasury, but Mrs. O'Donnell had recently received \$500 from the sale of the Adobe House Tour tickets sent out to members, so the work will continue.

It is hoped by the directors that the income from the tour will go a long way toward restoration of the old adobe, an irreplaceable part of Monterey's rich heritage. The support of the entire membership is needed on this most worthwhile project.

A possible source of revenue was suggested at the September meeting. The office attached to the south end of the Serrano Adobe is not an integral part of the building. It can be rented as an office without interfering with the character of the members' clubhouse. President Allen Knight appointed Directors Leutzinger, Davis and John Martin a committee to determine the cost of preparing it for office use, and the rent to be charged for it.

We are offered valuable antique furniture for the restored Serrano Adobe by Mr. Frank Work and Colonel Harold Mack.