

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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Nothing But Trouble . . .

(The story of the gentle arcadia of mission life in California has attracted more attention than probably any other period in the state's checkered history. The tale of the secularization of the missions, their rapid decay from garden spots to desolation and crumbling adobe walls, is a sad one and has been condemned by almost all who saw the immediate results.

But the padres who labored at the missions knew that their work was a pioneering venture and would ultimately pass into secular hands while they pressed on into the un-Christian wilds. In theory, all Spanish missions were limited to ten years and then turned over to parish priests, but this rule varied in practice. In 1821, at the height of the California mission prosperity, Spain's order to secularize the missions was published here, but nothing was done. In fact, although the 1820's were the brightest years at the missions, time was working against them. The Indians were dying off along the mission coastal strip, the settlers and ranchers resented the mission hold on land and labor, there was friction between local government and the mission authorities.

In 1830, Governor Echeandia instituted gradual dissolution of the missions and appointed agents to manage the mission estates for the Indians. The results of this action were disastrous, for the Indians, after sixty years of paternal guidance, were incapable of managing themselves or of becoming farmers and citizens. The next governor, Figueroa, tried to repair the damage, institute a more orderly system of gradual secularization and withhold mission lands from the hovering settlers and put it in trust for the Indians. In 1834, under orders from Mexico to put secularization into immediate effect, he countered with a plan for dissolution of ten missions in 1834, six more in 1835 and five in 1836, prohibited the selling of Indian lands and set aside one-half of the mission property under civil administrators for the support of the friars at the missions.

This was truly the end of the mission system. By 1839, when Governor Alvarado appointed William E. P. Hartnell as inspector to correct abuses and outright violations of the law, some administrators had milked their missions dry, the settlers had the Indian lands and were united in refusing to give them up, the Indians had reverted to savagery or vagrancy and Hartnell could make no headway.

By 1846, all the missions except Santa Barbara had been sold or granted as ranchos.

Those now in church hands were restored by presidential proclamation and the findings of the United States Land Commission in the 1850's and 1860's.

The story told by young Florencio Serrano of life at the secularized mission of San Antonio gives us an unparalleled view of the tension of the period. Padre Jesus Maria Vasquez del Mercado was, unfortunately, one of the few black sheep among the missionaries. He had arrived from Zacatecas only shortly before Serrano came to California and soon acquired a reputation for arrogance, quarrelsomeness, licentiousness and intemperance. He made life so unpleasant for the administrators that seven gave up their work in frustration. The natural result of this conflict was that the Indians became discontented and unmanageable. Padre del Mercado, because of seditious conduct, was sent back to Mexico in 1844.

Donald M. Craig)

(continued from the March issue)

After we got there, we stayed until past the middle of November when we began to go forward in small detachments with passports signed by Senor Gutierrez which ordered the administrators of the missions along the route and those missionaries who might have secular revenues to give us the necessary supplies until we reached Monterey. Each one of these detachments had as chief one of the colonists named by the Director.

While the whole expedition was still at San Gabriel, the naval captain Araujo got information, I don't know how, that a rider carrying a message of extraordinary import, sent by President Santa Ana from the capital of Mexico, was to arrive the next day. He was coming by way of the rancho of San Bernardino and it was said that he brought orders prejudicial to the colony for General Figueroa, political chief and commanding general of the territory.

The said Araujo, without the knowledge of Senor Hajar, laid a plot to hold back the messenger and hasten the Director of the colony forward to Monterey, for he also brought a warrant as governor of this territory and orders that the missions be handed to him for their secularization. To accomplish this end, Araujo gathered together all the young colonists, over whom he had great influence, and persuaded them to arm themselves, take to the road and, dividing themselves into three parties, to ambush the dispatch rider and take him prisoner.

Having succeeded in this, he brought the messenger into the presence of Senor Hajar, telling him, although the night was already far advanced that it was most important that he leave for Monterey the very next day to present his warrant and orders to Figueroa and immediately take over the governorship and receive the missions; that the mail rider and the messages he was bringing would be detained in San Gabriel until news was received from Hajar that he was in possession of his office. Then the mail would be set free to continue his ride.

To this preposterous plan Senor Hajar opposed himself with dignity, reprimanding Araujo sharply and saying to him, "Understand once and for all that

I am an honorable citizen, loyal to my country and obedient to the wishes of the Supreme Magistrate of the Nation, and if I should acquiesce in opposing the orders that the express-rider brings, my responsibility would be terrible and my name would be forever stained with an act of rebellion. I order you, therefore, to put that man at liberty and to deliver to him the dispatches of which he is the bearer. As for me, I shall march at once to present myself to General Figueroa and come to an understanding with him." By virtue of these orders of Senor Hajar, the messenger was set free, and in a very short while he continued on his journey.

On account of what had happened on the beach at San Diego, I, as well as many others of the expedition who kept turning over in our minds what was awaiting us in the future if we persisted in sticking to the colony, resolved to break away from it and present ourselves to General Figueroa, recognizing him as head of the country and making him realize that we wanted to stay in it as free citizens. Our contract with the Supreme Government had been broken by virtue of the fact that it had not made good the conditions stipulated to us.

This we did with regret, for we greatly appreciated Senor Hajar, who was truly worthy of it because of his honesty, fine courtesy and good heart; but unfortunately he was delicate of health and he lacked energy of character and allowed himself to be dominated by the Sub-Director Padres, who was a man of few scruples and who was influenced in his turn by the revolutionary Araujo.

Within a few days of my arrival in Monterey, I presented myself to General Figueroa and made known to him my firm resolution to belong no longer to the colony and therefore not to set out for Santa Rosa. The directors and the majority of the colonists were already there for the corvette **Morelos** had previously reached Monterey with the other section of the colony.

Even before the departure of the directors for Santa Rosa, Figueroa had received the orders from the express rider (of whom I have spoken before, and **who arrived in Monterey forty days after leaving the capital of the republic**, an incredibly swift journey in those days). By virtue of these orders, and from various communications that passed between the general and Hajar, the latter retained only the simple responsibility of Director of Colonization without any right at all to meddle with the property of the missions, because that was the way the territorial deputation settled matters.

Senor Figueroa was opposed to my separation from the expedition, basing his refusal on the contract with Mexico, and he offered to help me with 200 pesos so that I might buy what was necessary and go up to Santa Rosa. But I spoke to him with entire frankness, laying before his consideration the fact that my agreement with the colony was dissolved since it had broken its contract with me on the beach of San Diego and had not provided my subsistence, and that he knew better than I that any contract between two parties fell through if either of them violated the stipulated conditions. Our conversation lasted about two hours and Senor Figueroa, who in the beginning had taken a

rather sour view of my request, after having heard me out and perhaps, as a man of the world, recognized my true character, treated me in a very gentlemanly fashion, offering me his protection and saying that he would look for some way to procure me an occupation that would give me a living. Meanwhile he helped me with a small sum of money and in a few days he gave me a position with the administrator of the ex-mission of San Antonio and the necessary orders so that I might be received as his clerk at the small salary of 35 pesos per month, plus the necessary food for my table. I also received the responsibility of giving primary instruction to all the children resident in that district.

Scarcely was I settled at San Antonio than I got a letter from Senor Padres recalling me to my duty as a colonist. I answered it decently enough but rather coldly, telling him that I was no longer one of the colony and consequently he had no further claim on me. From thenceforward I was completely separated from the colony.

At the beginning of 1835, while pursuing my destiny at San Antonio, there was an uprising of the Indians. About 300 of them, armed in full war array, fell upon the mission at three in the afternoon, threatening death to the administrator, Don Mariano Soberanes, and his family who had no recourse but to lock themselves within the building and to bar the windows. I lived a little apart in another dwelling and I had in my company a respectable old fellow, a retired Mexican army captain named Don Juan de Dios Padilla, who had also come with the colony and who had withdrawn from it as I had. This gentleman was one of those whom the Spaniards called **insurgents** because he had been a soldier of the Mexican struggle for independence from its start in 1810.

Upon observing the hostile movements of the Indians, over whom we had some influence through our good treatment of them and some presents we occasionally gave them, we came out of our house. I had Padilla dress up in his army uniform with his captain's badge so as to inspire the rebels with more respect. We came up to them while they were still at some distance from the mission; we spoke to them gently, calling them "friends" and making them understand that if they had a grievance against the administrator that that was no way to remedy abuses, but that they should lay down their arms, gather together the oldest men in the big room of my house and clearly and simply make manifest their complaints. I, for my part, would write all this out in legal form, which, accompanied by an official note signed by Senor Captain Padilla we would dispatch by express-rider to General Figueroa, and that if they so desired, it would be well to appoint a committee of two or three old men from among themselves to be bearers of this letter and that they could present verbally all their woes to General Figueroa.

We had some difficulty in placating the anger of a few of them, but Senor Padilla made them a short speech, flattering them by telling them that they were no longer acolytes as in the times of the missions but that they were free men, and that as such they had a right to the protection of the authorities when-

ever they requested it peacefully and respectfully, but if they did the contrary, they became criminals and deserved punishment for their rebellious acts.

I left Padilla occupied with this peroration while I stepped out and walked around the building, for I had observed that from one side of it there was a continuous going and coming of Indians who seemed to be carrying instructions from some hidden source. I was not mistaken, for I caught Padre Jesus Maria Vasquez del Mercado with the back door half open and receiving those who came to take his orders which they immediately communicated to the rest. Upon seeing me arrive on the scene, he fell back in surprise and tried to close the door, but I prevented him from doing so and pushed myself inside. I then condemned his conduct, giving him to understand that it was very contrary to his character as a priest, for as a minister of God his mission was one of peace and not one of fomenting discord and occasioning the slaughter of a whole family, for he ought to realize that those whom he had stirred up were semi-savages and that nothing would hold them back once they set out on a career of crime.

Padre Mercado tried to browbeat me with haughty words and to shout me down, but I stopped him, using moderation although I let him know that if he did not immediately put out the fire he had lighted, I would start out at once for Monterey and lay the whole matter of his behavior before General Figueroa. The strength of this argument, and of others that I omit to mention, reduced him to a more peaceable frame of mind and by his own servants he sent orders for the Indians to withdraw.

Then I went back to where Padilla was and together we brought about 10 or 12 of the neophytes, among them the principal chief, a mestizo named Noriberto Aruz who spoke Spanish well, into my house and what I had counselled them to do was done. At eight that night the aforementioned chief with two others started for Monterey bearing the legal document and Padilla's official note.

We took good care that in this the name of Padre Mercado did not figure at all. Within a few days the Indian delegation returned bearing the reply of Senor Figueroa thanking us and saying that he would soon correct everything.

A few weeks later, Lieutenant Don Jose Maria Ramirez arrived with the title of administrator of the establishment of San Antonio.

Padre Mercado kept on finding fault and quarrelling with the administrator and never lost a chance to annoy him. He acted the same way to me and to Captain Padilla; he even wrote to General Figueroa, complaining that we did not attend church and that we were a scandal and a bad example to the congregation. Because of this report, Senor Figueroa committed the inconsiderate act of sending an official order to Administrator Ramirez charging him to reprimand us and order us to comply with the precepts of the Church. We must confess that Senor Figueroa was in a difficult position, since he knew very well the power and great influence that the missionaries exercised over the whole populace and he had no wish to clash with them.

Administrator Ramirez came over to my quarters, handed us the official note he had received, and carried out its instructions by exhorting us to obey the command of our chief. But Padilla and I both answered him, "Write to General Figueroa and tell him that Padre Mercado is wholly to blame for our staying away from church. His sermons, instead of preaching the gospel, sow discord against those who came in the colony. Once he used the following words, "My dear children in Christ! In this Christian congregation we have the misfortune to find two heretics who never frequent the church nor comply with the rules she imposes, and who in their conversation scatter abroad subversive doctrine against the Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church!" These, and many other expressions improper to a priest of God made us retire from the church."

Besides, on some nights, especially when travellers lodged at my house, Padre Mercado prowled around it and eavesdropped at the doors and windows to find out what they were talking about inside. I caught him red-handed in this espionage one night and the only excuse he could give me was that since it was a very hot night, he had stepped out to cool off. This also we commissioned Senor Ramirez to bring to the general's attention.

Padre Mercado's indiscretion came one day to such a point that, being in the mission corridor and arguing hotly with Ramirez, he said to him arrogantly, "You lie, and I tell more truth with the point of my foot than you do with your hog's snout!" So saying, he stamped on the ground with his right foot and clenching his fist, advanced on Ramirez. Fortunately, I was very near, and upon seeing this aggressive movement, I got between the two and made Ramirez go away while I tried to calm the friar's irritation.

A few months after the events to which I refer, I was attacked by a severe inflammation of the head and strong pains in the optic nerves which kept me in a darkened room, unable to suffer the light for three months and some days. As soon as I had gotten somewhat better and could stand daylight, I came to Monterey in search of a doctor who could cure me. Consequently, I know nothing more of the affairs at San Antonio except what I have occasionally heard.

THE MERIENDA

As always, the sun shone brightly on Monterey's birthday party, the barbecued steaks, flanked by salad, beans, chili and garlic loaves, were tender as a senorita's heart, the speeches were short and the conviviality all-embracing.

That courtly caballero, Gus Arriola, gave the welcoming address, and Padre Lawrence Farrell blessed the occasion, ending with the prayer so eloquently spoken by Padre Serra near the same spot in 1770. Accompanied by her doncellas, Polly Campbell and Kate Branson, lovely Alexandra Robison, the Favorita, was introduced by the association's president, Prof. A. Boyd Mewborn, and her greetings to the assembled notables and guests was phrased in the faultless Spanish that she had acquired last year as a student in Madrid. Her duena was Mrs. John Francis Doud.

The distinguished guests, including the Very Rev. Harry J. Clinch, Bishop of Monterey, Don Adolfo Dominguez, Consul General of Mexico, Don Antonio Vidal Gabas, Consul General of Spain, made brief speeches, and Mrs. W. R. Holman, Mrs. C. Tod Singleton and Mayo Hayes (Mrs. William) O'Donnell were singled out for special recognition.

The Laura Bride Powers Awards for service to Monterey and the spirit of our association were bestowed on Jess T. Chaffee, Superintendent of this district's State Department of Parks and Recreation, a loyal and hard-working friend of our association for many years—and to his utter surprise and humble gratitude, on your editor of these **Noticias** . . . The award now hangs in an honored place in his study wall.

Ted Durein, master of a thousand quips, was again master of ceremonies, while Aldo Romano, (the recipient this year of an honorary membership), Manuel Campos and his mariachi band and the dances of Joyce Kephart delighted the crowd with their Latin rhythms.

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

The Art Committee, headed by Donald Teague, has acquired for our association twelve large drawings by the distinguished Peninsula artist, the late Joe Mora. Some of the drawings were the prototypes of the illustrations in Mora's two authoritative books on the life of the California vaquero and his southwestern counterparts: **Californios** and **Trail Dust and Saddle Leather**, and they are unrivaled examples of his work. Congratulations to the committee for its perceptiveness.

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On reports that the First Brick House was suffering from neglect, Robert Ross and Francis Palms made an inspection of its exterior and found it truly in a deplorable condition. The old bricks, made locally in 1847, were loose and in many cases cracked and the softer interiors exposed. Mr. Palms estimated that a protective spray which would preserve the unbroken bricks would cost about \$200 and would hold up for four or five years. The broken bricks will need the work of a brickmason. The directors have sent a request to the Urban Renewal Agency to take immediate steps to repair the historic building.

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Gifts. The following items have been received since March: Drapes and lace curtains from the late Mrs. Grace Miller; chairs, dresser and rug from Mrs. Greene Chapman; and the alcalde's cane formerly used by Walter Colton, the first American alcalde of Monterey. This precious bit of Monterey's historical past was presented by Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Holman to Mrs. William O'Donnell (Mayo Hayes) for our association. There is a full description of the alcalde's staff in an early issue of the **Noticias** . . .

* * *

At the June meeting, Donald Smart, representing the Urban Renewal and Lawrence Halprin Associates, gave the directors a description of the designs for the Custom House Plaza area. The plans, illustrated with slides, showed the Scott, Olivier, Decatur Street and bay frontage area as essentially pedestrian-oriented with the accent on its historic character. There is vehicular access, but the dominant note is on the historic and visual values. The streets are tree-lined, the roadways slope imperceptibly to a mid-road paved gutter as in Spanish towns, and altogether, the prospect is charming.

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Robert Stanton, famous local architect, complimented the city, the designers and the Urban Renewal authorities for their vision and a plan that will make Monterey one of the outstandingly beautiful cities in the country. The directors approved the plans as presented.

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The latest report on the Adobe Tour is that it netted \$4,573 for our treasury.

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NEW MEMBERS

Mr. and Mrs. Joel L. Priest, Jr., Mrs. Margaret Hanna Lang, Dr. and Mrs. Paul Michael, Mr. and Mrs. Russell G. Bisnett, Mr. Frederick Bisnett, Mrs. Fenton Grigsby, Mrs. Charles W. McDaniel, Mr. and Mrs. Mike Savage, Mr. and Mrs. King Fleming, Mr. Chip Dixon, Miss Jodie Dixon, Janice Folsom Niebel, Mrs. O. J. Butler, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Ware, Miss Cathy Ware, Miss Lorri Ware, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Hardy, Major General and Mrs. Thomas A. Kenan.

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