

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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CHRISTMAS IN OLD MONTEREY

*By 85-year old Abel Espinosa, grandson of Josef Joaquin Caytano Espinosa who came to California in the 1796 expedition and in 1774 brought his wife and children here. Abel's account, as told to Charles H. Kilian, is reprinted here through the courtesy of Lee Harbick and the former local magazine, **What's Doing**, December 1947 issue.)*

"The autumns seem shorter now, and the winters more severe. I remember that when I was a boy—three quarters of a century ago, although it seems much less—the years went by in a more leisurely parade. Today, with automobiles and airplanes and all the changes which people call "advances," everything moves more rapidly, and we rush from the cradle to the grave.

"The time of which I want to tell you is a time when life was slow and gentle; when we were not in such haste to get each day over with; when we had time for more gracious living and the greater enjoyment of each other's society.

"In many ways our observation of the Christmas celebration here in Monterey in the old days differed but little from present-day rites. We gave gifts, gathered together for a good dinner, told the children tales of the Christ child, and gave them little presents so that they should know that they were loved and wanted.

"Our celebration of Christmas began early Christmas Eve. In those days each family lived in a large and comfortable adobe with plenty of room for entertaining. It was the custom each year for one family to entertain one or two other families with a big Christmas Eve dinner and party. For weeks before the celebration preparations would be made. We did not have turkeys as the traditional Christmas dinner. Instead, we had tamales and enchiladas made with beef, chile con carne y frijoles, *menudo*—a kind of soup, I suppose you could call it—salsa, a sauce which was made of chile and meats, corn pudding, suckling pig and baby lamb, and, for sweets, *conserva*, which was made from pumpkin rind cooked until it was crisp and sugary, and *bunuelos*—tortillas with a sauce

made of brown sugar, anise and water.

"Dinner would be early, and after dinner everyone would admire the Christmas tree, the children would be told stories and sent off to bed, but not until they had hung their stockings on the fireplace to be filled with presents for the morning.

"After the children were in bed, the grown-ups would present their gifts—and often they were valuable gifts of horses or cattle or surreys—or sometimes gifts of jewelry or clothing.

"When the gifts had been given and received, we had our dances. We would have cascarones, which are brightly colored egg shells filled with confetti, or perfume, or gold dust, or sometimes favors. These were crushed above the head of the girl you wished to compliment, showering her with the contents. This favor was supposed to be returned.

"Often during the evening we would have the dance of the *borregito* or "little lamb," (from the custom of breaking open a paper and cotton lamb that was hung from the ceiling and filled with gifts) in which a man and a woman would dance and at the same time sing, each answering the other with alternate lines of the song. It might happen that a group of wandering serenaders would play and sing beneath the window. If we wanted them to come in, we would place a lamp in the window, and they would join the party, but if we wished to be undisturbed, we would light no lamp, and soon they would go away, singing as they went.

"I must say something about the clothes the women wore to the parties. They never wore coats; just shawls, which were of the best materials and workmanship. They also wore *mantillas* and elaborate combs, and their dresses were of the finest silk. There is no such silk to be found today—it was very heavy and rich—we called it *raso* which is different from *seda*, or the ordinary silk that you see now. The ladies wore their hair upswept or tied in back so that their elaborate earrings could be seen and admired. Completing their costume were the flat Spanish shoes, made of fine imported leathers or the new, glossy patent leather.

The party went on, with its dancing and celebration, until almost twelve o'clock, when it abruptly ended, for everyone attended the *Misa del Gallo*—the Mass at the cock's crow—on Christmas Day.

"The celebration was not over, though, for it carried on through the whole week until New Year's Day, with dancing and festivity . . .

"It often seems to me that in those old days in Monterey when we lived simply we got more from life than you young fellows of the present generation. But then, I am an old man, and I presume that the days of our youth are dear to all of us, and are more attractive when you look back on them than when you live them."

Authentic recipes for the Christmas foods Abel Espinosa remembered appeared (with many more) in *Early California Hospitality* by Ana Béqué Packman. Her history of cookery and recipes from colonial days of California, published in 1938 by The Arthur Clark Co., Glendale, was and today remains a unique and scholarly record of how native foods of the western Indians were adapted to and combined with foods the colonists introduced. Thus were produced *las comidas de California de antes*. Ana Packman, like Abel Espinosa, was a descendant of Spanish ancestors who came to California in the 1770's. Through five generations traditional blending of native foods was passed down in her family. Her delightful and important book, now out of print but occasionally available, combines recipes with traditions and customs of early hospitality. Of the many feast days that filled the church calendar, that of *la Noche Buena* was the most important. Through the courtesy of publishers of the Packman book, we present recipes for some foods Abel recalled.



MENUDO

(Traditional Christmas dawn repast)

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|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3 pounds tripe | 1 dry chile |
| 1 hoof and shank veal | 2 teaspoons salt |
| 2 quarts nixtamal* or hominy | ½ teaspoon pepper |
| 1 onion | 3 mint stalks and leaves |
| 1 clove garlic | 1 dozen coriander leaves |

Wash tripe, veal hoof, and shank in several clear waters. Add nixtamal. Boil and skim. Cook for three hours or until ingredients are well done. Set aside overnight. To prepare for serving, cut tripe and jellied veal into inch pieces. Heat in stew kettle two tablespoons of the cold fat which formed on top of the meat. Add chopped onion, garlic, red chile, mint, and coriander leaves. Fry slowly. Then add meat, jellied broth and corn. Simmer for half an hour. Commercial hominy may be used in place of nixtamal. To be served in deep dishes as a soup.

*Corn dropped into a bath of ensernada (lime water bath), parboiled, hulled, and washed in many waters to remove lime taste. This was the foundation of the corn tortilla, tamale, and many dishes.

FRIJOLES

(Pink Beans Fried, a native American food, adopted by the colonists and without which a meal was never served in early California.)

2 cups frijoles (pink beans)
2 quarts boiling water

3 tablespoons fat
2 teaspoons salt

Pick over and wash two cups dry pink beans. Drop into two quarts boiling water and cook rapidly for two hours. Do not allow to dry; add water when necessary. Burnt beans are inexcusable. To test beans, crush between fingers; if soft and mealy, they are done and ready to fry.

Heat piping-hot the fat in iron frying pan and add drained beans. Stir until they have absorbed all the fat; then add the liquid in which beans were cooked, little by little. Salt and simmer for fifteen minutes.

With a heap of tortillas, the frijoles are ready to serve as a full meal or as a vegetable with various meat dishes.

ENCHILADAS

(Chile-drenched Tortillas, traditional food of the Mexican Indians)

12 tortillas
4 tablespoons fat
1 cup ripe black olives
½ pound white cheese
1 large onion
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon olive oil

12 dried red chiles
2 tablespoons fat
3 tablespoons toasted breadcrumbs
1 tablespoon vinegar
1 teaspoon salt

Filling

Mince onion, salt, and wilt in olive oil. Grate cheese. Pit olives.

Chile Drench

Wipe chiles clean. Stem, slit, remove seed veins and seeds, cover with boiling water, and cook until pulp separates from hulls. This should be a light puree.

Heat fat in skillet; brown flour or toasted breadcrumbs slightly; add well-mashed garlic, vinegar, and dash of oregano. Combine with chili puree. Simmer for twenty minutes.

Assemble all ingredients and place a large, warmed platter on small table near the stove. Keep chile sauce on stove, simmering very slowly.

In another skillet heat fat and fry tortillas one at a time. Do not fry crisp. Then immerse in chile and lift to warm platter. On half the chile-drenched tortilla place one level tablespoon grated cheese, one level tablespoon minced onion, and one tablespoon pitted olives. Fold as turnover. Repeat process until platter is filled. Then pour over all the chile that is left in skillet; sprinkle freely with grated cheese and minced onion. Garnish with balance of pitted olives. Keep hot to serve, but not dried out.

BUNUELOS

(Fried sweet tortillas, la Noche Buena dainty)

3 cups flour	1 egg
1 tablespoon sugar	½ cup milk
½ teaspoon salt	2 cups fat
1 teaspoon baking powder	

Sift flour, salt, baking powder, and sugar into bowl. Add well-beaten egg and milk, a little at a time. Knead until elastic. Divide dough into two-inch balls, and roll out into thin five-inch round cakes. Prick with fork. Deep fry one at a time. They should be a golden color.

Sauce

1 cup sugar
2 cups water
2 teaspoons aniseed

Bring water and aniseed to boil. Add sugar and make a syrup to be poured over the hot bunuelos.

DULCE DE CALABAZA

(Candied or conserved pumpkin)

3 pounds pumpkins (or banana squash)

Ensernada

1 gallon water
2 heaping tablespoons unslacked lime

Mix lime and water and stir frequently for half an hour, then allow to settle. Use only clear lime water.

Syrup

1 lemon	2 quarts water
2 teaspoons aniseed	2 quarts sugar

Pare the ripe pumpkin and cut into finger strips; drop into ensernada and let stand overnight. Next day drain pumpkin and wash well in fresh water to remove taste of lime.

To prepare the syrup, boil water and half the quantity of sugar, and add one sliced lemon and two teaspoons aniseed. Boil ten minutes.

Add drained pumpkin and cook briskly until it is transparent but firm. Remove from fire; drain; and chill.

Cook syrup and balance of sugar for five minutes. When pumpkin is thoroughly chilled, return it to the boiling syrup and cook slowly for one hour. When conserve is done it should be firm and brittle. As a conserve seal hot in jars. For candied pumpkin, drain pumpkin dry, roll in granulated sugar, spread on a tray, and place in an airy spot to season. This will last fresh for several weeks if packed and sealed in a box.

ANNUAL REPORT 1980-1981

The Annual Meeting of the Monterey History and Art Association's 50th Anniversary Year was held Monday, September 21, 1981, in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey. Mr. Burney Threadgill served as Master of Ceremonies for the evening, and John Keller and his musicians provided music.

Mr. Threadgill introduced President Harold C. Hallett who called the meeting to order. Election of officers preceded the dinner, attended by 208. The 1981-1982 slate of Directors, put in nomination by committee chairman, Mr. Frank Adams, was unanimously elected. Jane Campbell, Mr. Burney Threadgill, and Maggie Downer were nominated from the floor and elected to serve on the 1981-1982 Nominating Committee. The following Directors were nominated and elected unanimously to serve as officers for 1981-1982: President, Mrs. Martha J. Bentley; Vice-President, Mr. Douglas Despard, Jr.; Treasurer, Mr. Frank Fulton; Secretary, Mrs. Laura Granito.

Following dinner, Mr. Hallett resumed the business meeting, and introduced the Past Presidents: Mr. Ted Durein, Mr. Ed Bliss and Col. James Henderson. President Hallett thanked the hostess of the evening, Mrs. Laura Granito, and her committee; expressed appreciation to Master of Ceremonies, Burney Threadgill and to the Musicians, Mr. John Keller and the "Irregulars."

President Hallett talked of the beginning of the 50th Anniversary Year and introduced Col. James Henderson who was Chairman for that event which was a Reception by the Past Presidents Committee, held in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom at the Naval Postgraduate School on January 18, 1981. (A copy of Col. Henderson's Report may be found in the Annual Meeting File in the Office.)

Before proceeding with other Committee Reports, President Hallett expressed his appreciation to Nelle Currie who served as Vice Chairman for the Golden Anniversary Year, and Virginia Stanton who served as Special Events Chairman, as well as to all the people of the History and Art Association for their contributions which made this a year of celebration to remember! Mr. Hallett also noted that among those who provided special gifts to the Association were San Diego Federal Savings and Loan, Monterey Savings and Loan, the Old Monterey Council, Coburn Trust Fund, Mrs. Dienelt for her \$5,000 contribution, Mr. Harry Graham for typesetting the Newsletter each month free of charge, to Bob Manning for donating a beautiful new sign for the Casa Serrano, to Frank Work for the marvelous benefit dinner (The Association realized a profit of \$3,500 from this event), to Mr. Scott and Mr. Keller for opening their Mission Orchard House for a party which benefited the Association also, to Mrs. Atkinson who allowed her home to be used for a Four Seasons Party, and to Lahoma Hallett for compiling a scrapbook for the Golden Anniversary Year. This will be a four volume edition. Mr. Hallett invited members to add to the scrapbook by bringing pictures to the office.

Committee Reports: Mr. Hallett introduced all of the Committee Chairmen and called for oral reports for the Adobe Tour, the Antiques Show and Sales, Costumes, and Sloat Landing Ceremony. Copies of these reports are available in the Association Office files.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Frank Fulton, Treasurer, in light vein and to the delight of his audience, made a brief report which in summary was, "... we have a few thousand dollars more in the bank this year than last year. Increases are due to special events during the year, increased dues, and high interest."

Mr. Hallett introduced Dr. Antoine Da Vigo of Carmel who presented a framed copy of the music of his song, "Old Monterey", to the Association. Dr. Da Vigo provided his own accompaniment on the guitar and sang "Old Monterey."

President Hallett expressed appreciation for the office staff—Capt. James Wright, Martha Swain, and Marlene Blaisdell, and then introduced the new officers and expressed his strong approval of having a lady as the 51st President of the organization.

In-coming President Mrs. Bentley thanked the Association for electing her.

Mr. Threadgill presented gifts to Mr. and Mrs. Hallett, and a bouquet of flowers to Mrs. Granito, hostess for the evening.

GIFTS 1980-1981

Mrs. Duncan Todd, Acquisitions Chairman, reports that the Association again has been the fortunate recipient of a variety of gifts and is profoundly grateful to the following donors: Mr. and Mrs. Richard Heydt, Mr. Kenneth Boothe, Mrs. H. B. Berk, Mrs. Earle Prescott, Miss M. C. Jones, Mrs. Phyllis Dyer, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Peck, Ann Hubbs, Mr. Richard Haff, Mrs. Nelle Fry, Miss Miriam Downie, Mr. Bud Allen, Mrs. Vaun Johnson, Mrs. Dorothy Durham, Mrs. Eleanor Taylor, Mr. MacAlpine, the First Theatre, and the Vanity Fair Shop.

Donations included photographs and albums, a Lily Langtry Chest c. 1860; a pair of Victorian consoles of Frances Elkin's; two bedroom chairs from the home of Frances Doud; two mahogany framed Boronda sofas (given in memory of Sir Harry Downie); a Spode china table setting for eight; a Ferdinand Bergdorff watercolor; an 1890 chain stitch sewing machine; a collection of photos of the original Monterey angels; and other table accessories and miscellaneous furniture. The Maritime Museum received prints and a 16th century Spanish pirates' chest.

Several hundred important pieces were added to the Association's costume collection. For this bounty of gifts from "56 wonderful people", a list too extensive to acknowledge here, Costume Chairman Mrs. Harry Graham is very grateful. Items donated include linens, laces, and feathers; fans and shawls; men and women's outfits including two wedding gowns; lingerie and accessories; and Chinese costumes and fabrics. Each item is valuable to the study of historic clothes and is carefully catalogued. In March the *Noticias* will feature an article by Mrs. Graham who will share some of the lore of the costume collection.

IN MEMORIAM (February-November 1981)

Mrs. Francis C. Kilpatrick, Mr. Fred Klepich, Col. Step Tyner, Mr. George R. York, Mr. Charles M. Bentley, Mr. Peter Kutschera, Mrs. Frank L. Culin, Jr., Mrs. R. G. Watson, Col. Karl L. Scherer, Mrs. Clato Brocchini, Mrs. George Applegarth, Mrs. Allen Knight, Mr. Karl von Christerson, Col. Allen Griffin, Mr. Jerome E. Schoenfeld, Mrs. Joseph H. Boyd, Ann Pittendrigh.

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