



NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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A Green Thought

By Virginia W. Stone

What wondrous life is this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness:
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblances find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

“The Garden”

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

The lush imagery reflective of Marvell's 17th century poetic garden does not mirror the historic California gardens across the seas in Monterey. Of course, there would be apples and grapes, perhaps even peaches and melons in a warm year since watermelon seeds and peach pits have been unearthed in the old garden in back of the Cooper Molera Adobe. However, the sweet green quiltings of lawn often used to set off the English garden would only be yellowed and sere in our climate's summertime of garden abundance.

Richard Henry Dana's description of his first glimpse of Monterey in January, 1835, seems like England, or perhaps the New England of his homeland:

.....The shores are extremely well wooded (the pine abounding upon them), and as it was now the rainy season, everything was as green as nature could make it--the grass, the leaves, and all; the birds were singing in the woods, and great numbers of wild fowl were flying over our heads. Here we could lie safe from the southeasters. We came to anchor within two cables' lengths of the shore, and the town lay directly before us, making a very pretty appearance, its houses being of white-washed adobe, which gives a much better effect than those of Santa Barbara, which are mostly left of a

mud colour. The red tiles too, on the roofs, contrasted well with the white sides and with the extreme greenness of the lawn, upon which the houses — about a hundred in number — were dotted about, here and there, irregularly. There are in this place, and in every other town which I saw in California, no streets nor fences (except that here and there a small patch might be fenced in for a garden), so that the houses are placed at random upon the green. This, as they are of one story, and of the cottage form, gives them a pretty effect when seen from a little distance.⁽¹⁾

On Sunday, December 27, of that same year, the Pilgrim with Dana aboard, returned to Monterey:

....It was ten o'clock on Tuesday morning when we came to anchor. Monterey looked just as it did when I saw it last, which was eleven months before...The pretty lawn on which it stands, as green as sun and rain could make it; the pine woods on the south; the small river on the north side; the adobe houses, with their white walls and red-tiled roofs, dotted about on the green; the low white presidio with its soiled tri-coloured flag flying, and the discordant din of drums and trumpets of the noon parade--all brought up the scene we had witnessed here with so much pleasure nearly a year before, when coming from a long voyage, and from our unprepossessing reception at Santa Barbara. It seemed almost like coming to a home. ⁽²⁾

Thus, Dana never saw the town in the annual summertime drought when little or no rain falls between May and October, and the "green lawns" of his charming description would be nothing but the dusty gold of wayside weeds. Despite the land's proximity to the sea, the dry season, as well as cool summer fogs, are always a problem for the gardeners of the Monterey Peninsula.

The narrow coastal strip of climate which encompasses both Monterey and Carmel is classified as Zone 17 by the Sunset New Western Garden Book:

This climate is dominated by the ocean about 98 percent of the time. In most cases you can see salt water from Zone 17. If you can't you can probably hear the foghorn. ⁽³⁾

However, even within Sunset's neat Zone 17, micro-climates abound with warm "banana belts" not far from fog-cooled foliage.

Despite the area's unique climate, the gardeners quickly adapted to its special needs. No exact records of Monterey's early California gardens exist. Trying to reconstruct a garden typical of the period can only be an exercise in assumption. Young plants, perhaps protected by damp sawdust or wood shavings, would have been brought by sailing ship from Mexico. Certainly young fruit trees must have been off-loaded at the Custom House to provide familiar fruit for local orchards. Bare-root roses would have been tenderly transported along with slips of other flowering plants. Vegetable seeds would have been an easier matter, and there must have been room for flower seeds as well to lend color and fragrance to adobe gardens.

Jessie Fremont describes the pink roses climbing in profusion over the golden stone walls at the Castro Adobe in the summer of 1849, only three years after Commodore Sloat raised the American flag above the old Pacific capital. ⁽⁴⁾

And the romantic story of a yellow rose given as a pledge of devotion to a dark-eyed California senorita by a dashing young Army lieutenant dies hard.

Legend has it that Senorita Nachita Bonifacio was the sweetheart of the American General William Tecumseh Sherman and that he gave her a rose and it grew



Señorita Nachita Bonifacio

into a big tree, but General Sherman never came back—and the lady never married because she could not forget her first love.

Old-timers claim that Senorita Bonifacio at first tried to explain that she only met Sherman casually and there was nothing to the story but finally gave up trying to correct the error. She couldn't compete with what the people wanted to believe in the way of romance. ⁽⁵⁾

However, renowned local historian, Amelie Elkinton, recalls a conversation she and Mayo Hayes O'Donnell had with Juanita Johnson Cooper some years ago.

Juanita's mother and aunts had been raised by Nachita's mother when their own mother died young. At Nachita's death on January 5, 1916, Juanita joined several other women to help prepare the body for burial. In a small leather-bound chest, a fine black silk dress and exquisite underclothes were ready and waiting. In the same chest a packet of letters and a sword were found, along with instructions that these were to be buried with her along with her portrait by the Italian artist, Barbieri.

The canvas was cut from its frame, rolled, and placed as she wished along with the sword and the letters. When Mrs. Elkinton asked Mrs. Cooper if she had any idea of the contents of the letters, she answered that, of course, young women of proper up-bringing would not deign to read someone else's correspondence.

Mrs. Elkinton commented that it was a shame that no one would ever know the mystery of the papers. At that, Mrs. Cooper turned quickly and replied, "Of course, they were all from Sherman." After all, not many ladies are anxious to publish the fact that they were jilted by a young lieutenant who later became one the country's most famous military commanders.

With the arrival of the Americans, the sleepy little town of Monterey felt the repercussions of the growing tide of settlers moving into the state, not only for its mineral gold, but for the agricultural gold to be made in field and orchard. By 1865, less than two decades after the American occupation, there were 24 nurseries in the San Francisco, Sacramento, and San Jose areas. Many of them published elaborate catalogues listing not only the plants and garden tools for sale but horticultural advice as well.

Warren's Nursery Catalogue published January 1, 1853, ran over 70 pages in length.

The introduction sets out the purpose of the catalogue in no light-hearted way:

The Proprietors, in presenting this Catalogue to the public beg leave to say that the leading design of their Nursery Establishment and Garden is to collect only those kinds of fruits and plants which, from their superior qualities, habits of growth, productiveness and beauty, recommend themselves for general cultivation, being of opinion that it is useless to grow fruits of an inferior kind, when varieties exist superior to them for quality, and equal in all other respects. (6)

The nursery's "superior" fruit trees are alleged to be of "splendid specimen fruits, which have been exhibited at the rooms of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Boston, also at the Fair of the American Institute, New York, and have received premiums." (7) The stock, of course, would have been brought by sailing ship around the Horn, a long and stormy trip in any season.

The lists of plants and seeds that follow rival, or surpass, today's catalogues. For example, there are 38 varieties of apple, including the popular Baldwin, Gravenstein, and Pippin, but there are many "lost" apples, too, which do not appear in modern catalogues. Whatever happened to the Gilly-

flower, the Maiden's Blush, the Minister (could these last two have any subtle relationship?) the Pumpkin Sweeting, and William's Favorite, for example.

A recent article in the New Yorker magazine chronicles the fate of these unfortunates.

During the Victorian period, hundreds of different sorts of apples were available, and one orchardist alone might have over fifty varieties picked and stored by late autumn. Unfortunately, the pressures of modern commercialism have greatly reduced the number of varieties available to the ordinary British consumer, and some of the best have all but disappeared.⁽⁸⁾

If true in England, how much more sadly true here in the United States.

Warren's boasted 19 varieties of cherry including the Black Heart, Honey Heart, and Ox Heart. The Bing and Lambert, popular market cherries today, were developed later in the state of Oregon.⁽⁹⁾ Fifty-four varieties of pears could be ordered from our intrepid nurserymen, along with apricots, peaches, quince, and figs.

There are two pages of ornamental shrubs and trees and six pages of roses, including substantial lists of Chinese, Tea-scented China, Bourbon, Noisette, Damask, Multiflora, and Moss roses. We are told that "it is the intention of the Proprietors to make this department of culture an object of their especial care."⁽¹⁰⁾

Following lists of berries, flowers and herbs is a cornucopia of vegetables that can be raised from seeds and plants. We find not only artichokes and asparagus but 25 varieties of beans, as well as beets, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, but strangely only two varieties of carrot, one of which is the large white field carrot which is "best for cattle". For salads there is celery, cress, lettuce, parsley and five kinds of tomatoes, including both red and yellow cherry tomatoes. Succulent soups and stews could be made of onion, leek, potato, turnip and parsnip. Six varieties of corn are listed including both field and sweet corn which is "best for boiling". Along with 14 varieties of peas, we find seven kinds of squash including the scollop (sic) and crookneck, but not the prodigious zucchini with its overwhelming progeny.

Juan Bautista Rogers Cooper, who began building the Cooper-Molera home in 1828, no doubt sought to please his California bride by ordering or bringing her seeds and plants.

...on August 24, 1827, Cooper married Encarnacion Vallejo. Almost nothing is known of their romance or betrothal, other than that Cooper had once written to Hunnewell (a business associate and life-long friend) telling of the difficulty of finding lodgings in Monterey, of his being accepted as a boarder at the Vallejo home, "and there I met a long-spliced girl...got to like her and married her...I put it down as one thing done right in my life."⁽¹¹⁾

At the Cooper-Molera Adobe a concerted effort is being made to recreate the gardens of the past. For Frances Grate, a Monterey State Historic Park guide, who is bringing her knowledge and expertise to this project, this has been a labor of love.

"My role is to research and locate the horticulturally and historically authentic plant material and place it aesthetically in the garden," she states.

Although the beds may not be historically sited, a brief stroll through the

1853-54.

A

DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE

— OF —

FRUIT AND ORNAMENTAL TREES,

GRAPE VINES, SHRUBS, AND HERBACEOUS PLANTS,

ROSES, DAHLIAS,

GREEN-HOUSE PLANTS, &c.,

CULTIVATED AT

WARREN & SON'S GARDEN AND NURSERIES,

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA.

ALSO, A CATALOGUE OF

FLOWER, FRUIT TREE, VEGETABLE & FIELD SEEDS,

WITH BRIEF DIRECTIONS FOR CULTIVATING MOST OF THE SORTS NAMED.

A LIST OF BOTANICAL AND HORTICULTURAL BOOKS,

GARDENING IMPLEMENTS, &c.,

FOR SALE AT OUR WAREHOUSES,

WINTER'S ROW, BATTERY STREET,

SAN FRANCISCO,

— AND —

No. 15 J STREET, (near the Levee,)

SACRAMENTO

old orchard with a lingering pause to enjoy the sweetness of the roses helps to evoke a nostalgic journey to the mid-1800's. Outstanding examples of the old roses growing along the white picket fence are Ispshan, a hybrid Bourbon, circa 1800, and Marquise Bocella, circa 1842, both of which are vigorous bloomers with small delicate pink or red flowers and a light, airy fragrance.

In a sunny protected area near the old barns is a large plot where tender young shoots of corn, beans, potatoes, and pumpkins are a green pattern of leaves on the dark ground. Only the vegetables likely to be found in Warren's nursery catalogue are grown there under the watchful eye of volunteer Sam R. Smith.

Frances reminds us that the three daughters of Ignacio Vallejo lived within a few blocks of each other. Prudenciana, married to Jose Amesti, lived in the Casa Amesti, now the site of the Old Capital Club. Rosalia was married to J.P. Leese and lived in the Larkin House after the Larkin family moved to San Francisco during the Gold Rush, and of course, Encarnacion was married to the indefatigable J.B.R. Cooper.

The three sisters were devout Catholics, and it is more than likely that besides the fruit and vegetables raised in the Cooper garden, flowers from there, as well as the Larkin House and Casa Amesti, were dedicated to the glory of the Lord at the Royal Presidio Chapel.

The stately yucca (yucca whippiel), often called the Lord's candle, Madonna lilies (*lilium candidum*) the true lily of the Bible as well as of medieval romance, and the flowers of the passion vine (*passiflora*), especially revered for their religious symbolism, might all have been carried to church by the sisters.

Casa Amesti, Prudenciana's home, faces eastward on what is now Polk Street:

Behind a high, thick hand-made adobe wall lies a large garden area where the family could have protection and privacy and where, in the old days, stood the buildings in which all the special household activities might be carried on: the cook-shed, the corral, the baking oven. The graceful balconies are made for visits with friends over a cup of chocolate in either morning or afternoon sunshine.

The atmosphere of walled garden and house developed within the bounds of a city plot is very Spanish and extremely warm and pleasant. When E.L. Williams was invited there on a summer evening in the 1850's he noted the bonfires that lighted the courtyards so that "it was easy to discern all that might be going on."⁽¹²⁾

After Prudenciana's death, her daughter Carmen lived there, and eventually it passed out of the Amesti family when it was sold by her son-in-law, Santiago J. Duckworth, around the turn of the century.

There is a story that around this time the adobe became a boarding house run by a flower-loving Frenchwoman. Not content with a garden in the patio, she planted flowers in front of the house as well. The fact that her blooms and shrubs occupied what would have been the sidewalk and part of the street was of no particular importance to anyone. The city street department simply detoured around the pretty sight, and soon the street had a decided bulge before the Amesti Adobe. Eventually, either the

gardener moved away or the city asserted itself, for today the curb runs obediently straight and the sidewalk almost touches the house.⁽¹³⁾

Larkin House also boasted a walled garden, and an old well used by the family has been located. Besides the flowers that were doubtlessly grown there, we know that pumpkins were an important feature of the vegetable garden, as Mrs. Larkin mentioned bringing some indoors to serve as auxiliary seating during various social occasions.

When Mrs. Alice Larkin Toulmin took over the property in 1922, the garden took on a decided English feeling. Only lavender, rose, mauve, and blue flowers were permitted a stay in the garden, and all yellow or gold blossoms were banished.

The small chalkrock building, which had served as Larkin's warehouse, became U.S. Army property after the American occupation, beginning in 1846, and it is here that Lieutenant Sherman lived and worked. It was damaged when a large redwood tree growing in the garden toppled in a winter storm many years ago, and its replacement, planted by Stuyvesant Fish in 1942, is now of impressive size.

Besides the more showy flowers that would often be used to decorate the altar of the church, lemon verbena, jasmine, and datura were probably grown in the typical California garden.⁽¹⁴⁾ According to Frances Grate, the formal herb garden was essentially a Victorian fascination, although familiar herbs such as rosemary, parsley, and thyme undoubtedly spiced the soups and stews of these hospitable people, and are grown in the Cooper-Molera garden today. Lavender and scented geraniums must have been grown for their aromatic sweetness, perhaps to be dried for their special role in freshening the heavy bed linens that might otherwise be cold and dank during the wintertime chill.

The well providing water for the Cooper House has never been found, although that at the adjoining Diaz property has been located. Although there were undoubtedly severe flooding problems during the rainy season when nearby Hartnell Gulch overflowed its banks, modern construction has tempered the problem. Irrigation is a necessity today, and the soil needs much work after so many years of lying fallow.⁽¹⁵⁾

The garden at Encarnacion's house is a growing concept just as the old and new plantings are a reminder of its former history. It can never be a perfect image of a set moment in the past, but Frances Grate believes that if we can capture the essence of the old garden, we can gain a compelling glimpse into a time when "all the world was new."

The garden at the Carmel Mission is alive with color in the spring. Scarlet webs of bougainvillea blaze on the walls near a fuchsia originating in Peru that towers to a height of 18 feet in a corner of the old building. The pale green and gold of citrus are soft against the dark shadow of a giant cypress. Everywhere there are flowers.

Robert Kramer, whose dedication to the garden and its conception by Harry Downie, a prime mover in the restoration of the mission, is responsible for the beauty that makes this hallowed place so special. Again, according to Robert, we do not know the exact plants that were grown in the mission garden.

"I do my very best to have the garden the way Harry would want it," he says.

We do know that the mission garden of the past would be classified today as

a functional garden. Whatever was grown was put to use. Flax and hemp would provide cloth, rope or string. Perhaps pepper and olive trees would be included along with the inevitable citrus trees.

The Little League field to the south was once the mission orchard, its only living vestige a few ancient pear trees still bearing fruit at the former home of the Lloyd Tevis family. According to Robert, pear trees will survive longer than any other fruit tree.

It is interesting to note that after the secularization of the mission properties, there were a number of records involving this very orchard after its purchase by Graciano Manjares on October 26, 1844. His assessment records show that on June 14, 1850, he owned two tame cows, three yoke of oxen, an orchard of trees, 235 varas square with 53 "serviceable" trees.⁽¹⁶⁾

Robert Kramer tells the story of a sturdy little sapling growing close to the rock well where he eats his brown bag lunch every noon. He transplanted the interloper to a sunny area of the old courtyard where it is growing lustily, now identified as a plum tree.

He surmises it probably grew as a result of being dropped from his lunch bag one summer day. Someday a handsome plum tree will flower and fruit in the old mission garden perhaps creating its own story.

And so it is that the yellow rose of legends past and the white plum of future legends are rooted in the desire for peace and provender that "greenthoughts" provide for mankind.

FOOTNOTES

1. DANA, Richard Henry - "Two Years Before the Mast," pp. 76-77.

2. IBID., pp. 228-229.

3. SUNSET NEW WEST GARDEN BOOK, p. 24.

4. HERR, Pamela, "Jessie Benton Fremont," American Woman of the Century, p. 203.

5. FISHER, Anne B., "No More a Stranger," p. 222.

6. WARREN's, "A Descriptive Catalogue," p. iii.

7. IBID.

8. HOFSTADTER, Dan, "Oxford Food Symposium, The New Yorker," p. 96.

9. This writer's great grand-father, Joseph H. Lambert was a well-respected orchardist who owned land with his father-in-law, Henry G. Miller, on the banks of the Willamette River near Portland, Oregon, where Waverly Country Club is located today. He originated the Lambert cherry in the 1870's about the same time that Seth Luelling developed a new variety of cherry calling it Bing after his giant Chinese foreman, Ah Sit Bing.

10. WARREN's, p. 27.

11. WOOLFENDEN, John and ELKINTON, Amelie, "Cooper, Juan Bautista Rogers Cooper," p. 11.

12. ELKINTON, Amelie, "The Story of the Amesti Adobe," Noticias, March, 1963, Volume VII, p. 2.

13. IBID., p. 6.

14. There is a charming reference to a datura plant growing near the Malloy's boiler home in Steinbeck's Cannery Row: "Then someone threw out a datura root and the thick fleshy tree grew up and the great white bells hung down over the boiler door and at night the flowers smelled of love and excitement, an incredibly sweet and moving odor." (p. 34).

15. The Carmel Garden Club has generously underwritten the cost of a new drip irrigation system.

16. Vallejo Documents, CB 35:195, p. 475.

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