

# **NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY**

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**PEBBLE BEACH GOLF COURSE, May, 1861** - This early photo was taken of the Brewer survey party, then encamped near Stillwater Cove. Cracks appear to be due to the shrinkage of emulsion, a common problem with early day photographic printing. See story, page 5.

## **Camping at Pebble Beach, 1861**

### **Survey Party Visits Monterey**

In late spring, 1861, a small party of men, led by a tall, imposing man with a full black beard, entered the upper reaches of the Salinas Valley. The leader was William H. Brewer, acting head of the first California



State Geological Survey, and he was not impressed with what he saw. He wrote:

....the entire aspect of the country changed. It was as if we had passed into another land and another clime. The Salinas Valley thus far is much less verdant than we anticipated. There are more trees but less grass. Imagine a plain ten to twenty miles wide, cut up by valleys into innumerable hills two to four hundred feet high, their summits of nearly the same level, their sides rounded into gentle slopes. The soil is already dry and parched, the grass already dry as hay, except along streams, the hills brown as a stubble field.

Brewer's observations, jotted down almost 130 years ago, corroborate the fact that periods of drought are common throughout Central and Southern California and that the recent scarcity of precipitation is part of an ever-recurring cycle rather than an isolated instance. As Brewer and his party proceeded further up the valley, he began to discern the country's special appeal:

....scattered over these hills and in these valleys are trees every few rods--great oaks, often of immense size, ten, twelve, eighteen and more feet in circumference, but not high; their wide-spreading branches making heads often over a hundred feet in diameter--of the deepest green foliage--while from every branch hangs a trailing lichen, often several feet long and as delicate as lace. In passing over this country, every hill and valley presents a new view of these trees--here a park, there a vista with the blue mountains ahead. I could never tire of watching some of these beautiful places of natural scenery. A few pines were seen for several miles, with a very open, airy habit, entirely unlike any pine I have ever seen before, even lighter and airier than the Italian pines common in Southern France by the Mediterranean.

Although the primary objective of the survey was to assess the state's mineral wealth, Brewer's official title was "Principal Assistant in charge of Botanical Department," and his background was in the study of agriculture. There is, therefore, considerable irony in his unenthusiastic report of the Salinas Valley, later to become famous for the prodigious yield of its vegetable crops. In addition to what he called "botanizing", Brewer's role with the survey was to act as leader in the absence of Josiah Dwight Whitney, who had been appointed State Geologist the year before. Following the "easy pickings" of the early days of the gold rush, many in California felt there were numerous other deposits of--not only gold--but other valuable minerals hidden beneath the verdant valleys and dry deserts of the state.

In April, 1860, the California Legislature charged Whitney with the task of making "an accurate and complete Geological Survey of the State, and to furnish, in his Report of the same, proper maps and diagrams thereof, with a full and scientific description of its rocks, fossils, soils and minerals, and of its botanical and zoological



productions, together with specimens of the same."

The directive allowed him to hire as many assistants as he wished, but declared the initial outlay for this Herculean effort should not exceed \$20,000.

Whitney, a Yale graduate, followed the recommendation of friends on the East Coast and offered the job of second-in-command to Brewer, who had also studied at Yale, and was, at the time, teaching chemistry at Washington College in Pennsylvania. It seemed an odd choice, for Whitney had never met Brewer and there was little in the chemistry professor's background that would seem to recommend him for such responsibility.

Brewer had grown up on a farm in upper New York state, studied agricultural chemistry and taught at a number of institutions in the East. He had also traveled and studied in Europe for several years. At the time he was contacted by Whitney, Brewer's life was in a turmoil. A short time before, his wife had died in childbirth, and his infant son followed several weeks later. Perhaps hoping to refocus his life, Brewer accepted Whitney's offer.

It turned out to be a fortuitous circumstance, for not only did Brewer distinguish himself as a leader of men and as a keen and observant scientist, but he also turned out to be a fine and prolific writer.

In the introduction to "Up and Down California in 1860-1864", a collection of Brewer's letters and journals, editor Francis P. Farquhar wrote:

**In the midst of a most prodigious activity, he found time to keep several distinct sets of notebooks, to prepare elaborate scientific reports, to engage in miscellaneous correspondence, and to write the vigorous and comprehensive letters that constitute his personal journal. These letters are the more remarkable in that they were sometimes written late at night by firelight or candlelight, sometimes in the blistering heat of a summer noon, sometimes in a leaky tent with cold rain and wind outside.**

For historians, Brewer's writings give a rare look at California while the nation's attention seemed focused on the ebb and flow of the Civil War.

Brewer arrived in San Francisco in November of 1860 and was met by Whitney, whom he knew only through correspondence. Although very different in temperaments, the two men seem to have gotten along well during the four years of the survey. Where Whitney had something of a prickly nature, Brewer had a more balanced outlook. The two men sailed to Los Angeles and the survey officially commenced just before the start of the new year, 1861.

Whitney and Brewer traveled together until February 7, when Whitney departed for San Francisco to attend to other duties, leaving Brewer in charge.

By mid-April, the small party of six men had reached San Luis Obispo and the former Eastern chemistry teacher was a new man. He wrote his brother:



My health is excellent. The chaparral was so bad for pants that I bought three buckskins. Peter (a mule driver) "smoked" them as Indians do, and from them I have made a splendid pair of pants, which defy chaparral, are healthy for rattlesnakes and tarantulas, and please me very much in every way, except that they are not particularly ornamental--in fact, I would hardly attend a party in the East in them. The hot sun has given the color of a well-smoked ham to my hands and face; my hair nearly came out, so I have it cut short, the longest scarcely half an inch long. How I would like to happen in on you. See if you would recognize the CAPTAIN of our geological party.

During the same stop, Brewer describes doing "chores:"

First, dinner; next, put on clean clothes and wash my dirty ones. A few buttons sewn on, and rents repaired; then the garments lay in the water to soak while I wrote a letter of three sheets to headquarters, during which time a flock of sheep trod my shirts into the mud. Then the wash, that I so much abominate. But clothes must be cleansed, and there is no woman to do it. Were I to describe the abominable operation it would take a whole letter. I can't do it--just some items only. First, I get a place on the bank and begin. A huge gust scatters sand over the wet clothes, which are in a pile on the bank. Stockings are washed--I congratulate myself on how well I have done it. An undershirt is begun--goes on swimmingly. Suddenly the sand close to the water where I squat gives way. I go in, half boot deep, and in the strife to get out, tread on the clean stockings and shove them three inches into the mud and sand. A stick is got and laid close to the water. On that I kneel, as do the Mexican and Indian washerwomen. This goes better, and the work goes bravely on. Next, the slippery soap glides out of my hands and into the deep water--here a long delay in poking it out with a long stick, during which performance it goes every way except toward shore. At last the final garment is washed. With a long breath I rise to leave, when I find the lowest of the clean pile is all dirty from the log I laid them on--the cleanest place I could find. But soon all difficulties are surmounted, and the clothes are now fluttering in the wind, suspended from one of the guy ropes of our tent. The picture is underdrawn rather than exaggerated--just try it by taking your clothes to the creek to wash the next time.

As the survey party traveled further North, Brewer had further thoughts about the Salinas Valley, including some small hint of what the future might hold:

I do not know where they got their water in former times, but it is dry enough now. We came on seventeen miles farther. Here we find tolerable feed and a spring of poor water, so here is a ranch.

Sorry as has been this picture, it is not overdrawn, yet all this land is occupied as "ranches" under Spanish grants. Cattle are





**ACTING CAPTAIN** - This photo shows Brewer, armed for the wilderness, at the commencement of the first California Geological Survey. The picture was taken in San Francisco.

watered at the river and feed on the plains, and scanty as is the feed, thousands are kept on this space, which must be at least four to six thousand square miles, counting way back to the Santa Lucia Mountains. The ranches do not cover all this, but cover the *water*, which is the same thing. We could see a house by the river every fifteen to eighteen miles, and saw frequent herds of cattle. The season is unusually dry, and the plain seems much poorer than it really is. In the spring, two months ago, it was all green, and must have been of exceeding beauty. With water this would be finer than the Rhine Valley itself; as it is, it is half desert.

Between Salinas and Monterey, the group set up camp. A stage stopped so the horses could be watered and, among the passengers, Brewer encountered Edward Tompkins, an acquaintance he met while traveling from the East Coast. Tompkins, an attorney, settled in the San Francisco Bay Area, but had traded some land in the East for what



Brewer called "A ranch near Monterey, on the coast."\* Although Tompkins was on his way back from visiting his property, he insisted Brewer stay at the ranch and gave him a letter of introduction to the ranch foreman. From the chance meeting, we have one of the first tourist accounts of Pebble Beach, for Tompkins' property, known as Pescadero Ranch, is now the site of the Pebble Beach Golf Course. The next morning, a Sunday, the survey party moved on to Monterey. That night Brewer wrote:

It is a lovely evening--the moon shines brightly, the old pines and thick oaks by our camp cast dark shadows, and the quiet bay sparkles in the moonlight.

I have been to church today--attended Protestant service for the first time since last November, nearly six months ago. There is a Methodist mission station here. I heard there was to be service at 11 A.M. in the courthouse, so was on hand. The rest of the party went to Mass. I found two or three fellows loafing on the porch, and as the door was locked, a man started to find somebody who had the key. Meanwhile, a dozen collected on the porch. After much delay the key was found, and, half an hour after time, services opened. How unlike a Roman missionary--*he* would have had all ready and shown himself "diligent in business" as well as "fervent in spirit." The congregation at last numbered some twenty or twenty-five persons, not counting the few children. The clergyman was a very doleful looking man, with *very* dull style and manner, who spoke as if he did it because he thought it his duty to preach and not because he had any special object in convincing or moving his audience. His nose was very pug, his person very lean, his collar very high and stiff, and his whole appearance denoted a man entirely lacking energy, surely *not* the man for a California missionary.

Monterey has about 1,600 inhabitants and is more Mexican than I expected. It is the old capital of California. There are two Catholic churches, and Spanish is still the prevailing language. Like all other places yet seen, more than half of the "places of business" are liquor shops, billiard saloons, etc.--all the stores sell cigars, *cigarritos*, and liquor. Stores are open on Sunday as well as other days, and that is the day for saloons and barrooms to reap a rich harvest. Billiard tables go from morning till midnight--cards and *monte* are no secrets. Thus it has been in all the towns. Liquor and gambling are the curse of this state.

After several days, Brewer and his group took up Tompkins' invitation and camped at Pescadero Ranch:

It is a ranch of four or five thousand acres, on the coast about five miles from Monterey. We pitched our tent in the yard, but a larger log house is our headquarters. Last Monday, while in Monterey, a dull day with showers, we got an "artist" to bring his camera out to camp and take a few pictures of camp on leather. He took four--not good in an artistic sense, but good as showing our camp. We divided our pictures by cutting cards for the choice, and I got the



best picture.

Pescadero Ranch was formerly owned by an eccentric, misanthropic, curious man, who lived in solitude and tried to educate two boys, keeping aloof from the world and the rest of mankind. He built a large and very secure log house, for fear of robbers, just on the shore of the Pacific, by a lively little bay. Behind rise hills covered with tall dark pines, and near the house is a field of about a hundred or more acres, fenced in, where we have fine feed for our mules. His books are still here--a strange collection of science, art, astrology, romance, infidelity, religion, mysteries, etc. Old harness, spades, implements, harpoons, etc., are stored in large numbers. I know not why he had them. He had invented a new harpoon which no one would use.

By the way, Monterey is a great place for whaling. Two companies are at work, and already over half a dozen whales have been taken here. On Wednesday we saw them towing one in, and on Thursday morning went down to see them cut him up. Here was a huge fellow, fifty feet long. Last year they caught one ninety-three feet long which made over a hundred barrels of oil. After stripping off the blubber, the carcasses are towed out into the bay, and generally drift up on the southeast side. The number of whale bones on the sandy beach is astonishing--the beach is white with them.

Like many visitors to Pebble Beach, Brewer was anxious to share the beauties of the coast with his friends. He had an opportunity the following year, when he returned, this time with Whitney, who was visiting from San Francisco:

The next morning we went on to Pescadero Ranch, found no one at home, so climbed in by the window, opened the back door, and "took possession." This was the place where we had encamped so long, you recollect. I had found the geology too much for me, and wanted Professor Whitney to see it; hence our visit to Monterey, for it was a matter of some importance to settle. Mr. Tompkins, the owner of the ranch, had tendered us its hospitalities, but his *buccaro*, Charley, was gone--all the dishes dirty on the table, and no provisions to be found, no candles, no wood cut. We spent the day looking up the objects we had come to see. Averill went into town, four miles, and got supplies, we washed up the dishes, got our dinner and supper, and made ourselves comfortable. Professor Whitney was as much interested as I had been, both in the geology and in the abundant life in the sea.

I wish I could describe the coast there, the rocks jutting into the sea, teeming with life to an extent you, who have only seen other coasts, cannot appreciate. Shellfish of innumerable forms, from the great and brilliant abalone to the smallest limpet--every rock matted with them, stuck into crevices, clinging to stones--millions of them. Crustaceans (crabs, etc.) of strange forms and brilliant colors, scampered into every nook at our approach. Zoöphytes of brilliant hue, whole rocks covered closely with sea anemones so closely that the rock could not be seen--each with its hundred



arms extended to catch the passing prey. Some forms of these "sea flowers," as they are called because of their shape, were as large as a dinner plate, or from six to twelve inches in diameter! Every pool of water left in the rugged rocks by the receding tide was the most populous aquarium to be imagined. More species could be collected in one mile of that coast than in a hundred miles of the Atlantic coast.

Birds scream in the air--gulls, pelicans, birds large and birds small, in flocks like clouds. Seals and sea lions bask on the rocky islands close to the shore; their voices can be heard night and day. Buzzards strive for offal on the beach, crows and ravens "caw" from the trees, while hawks, eagles, owls, vultures, etc., abound. These last are enormous birds, like a condor, and nearly as large. We have seen some that would probably weigh fifty or sixty pounds, and I have frequently picked up their quills over two feet long--one thirty inches--and I have seen them thirty-two inches long. They are called condors by the Americans.

During their first stay at the ranch, Brewer and several of his men visited the Carmel mission. The church was secularized in 1833 and in less than three decades, what had once been the hub of religious activity, surrounded by fields and pastures, was rapidly being reclaimed by nature.

It is now a complete ruin, entirely desolate, not a house is now inhabited. The principal buildings were built around a square, enclosing a court. We rode over a broken *adobe* wall into this court. Hundreds (literally) of squirrels scampered around to their holes in the old walls. We rode through an archway into and through several rooms, then rode into the church. The main entrance was quite fine, the stone doorway finely cut. The doors, of cedar, lay nearby on the ground.

The church is of stone, about 150 feet long on the inside, has two towers, and was built with more architectural taste than any we have seen before. About half of the roof had fallen in, the rest was good. The paintings and inscriptions on the walls were mostly obliterated. Cattle had free access to all parts; the broken font, finely carved in stone, lay in a corner; broken columns were strewn around where the altar was; and a very large owl flew frightened from its nest over the high altar. I dismounted, tied my mule to a broken pillar, climbed over the rubbish to the altar, and passed into the sacristy. There were the remains of an old shrine and niches for images. A dead pig lay beneath the finely carved font for holy water. I went into the next room, which had very thick walls--four and a half feet thick--and a single small window, barred with stout iron bars. Heavy stone steps led from here, through a passage, in the thick wall, to the pulpit. As I started to ascend, a very large owl flew out of a nook. Thousands of birds, apparently, lived in nooks of the old deserted walls of the ruins, and the number of ground squirrels burrowing in the old mounds made by the crumbling *adobe* walls and the deserted *adobe* houses was incredible--we must have seen *thousands* in the



aggregate. This seems a big story, but hundreds were in sight at once. The old garden was now a barley field, but there were many fine pear trees left, now full of young fruit.\*\* Roses bloomed luxuriantly in the deserted places, and geraniums flourished as rank weeds. So have passed away wealth and power even in this new country.

In late May, Brewer and three companions made a foray up Carmel Valley:

We followed the road about twenty miles. Five ranches were passed; some barley fields along the river, and wild oats in abundance on the hills, supporting many cattle. We lunched at a stream, saddled, and were again off. Here we left the road, and for fifteen miles followed trails, now winding along a steep hillside--steep as a Gothic roof, the stones from the path bounding into a canyon hundreds of feet below--now through a wide stretch of wild oats, now through a deep canyon. We passed two more ranches, where cattle are raised among the hills, and at last struck through a rocky canyon, in which flowed a fine stream, with some glorious old trees...

I climbed the mountain for "geology." First I passed through a wild canyon, then over hills covered with oats, with here and there trees--oaks and pines. Some of these oaks were noble ones indeed...

Up, still up, I toiled, got above the grass and oats and trees into the chaparral that covers the high peaks. I struck for the highest peak, but backed out before quite reaching it, for the traces of grizzlies and lions became entirely too thick for anything like safety. Both are very numerous here.

But what a magnificent view I had! A range of hills two thousand to three thousand feet high extends from Monterey to Soledad. It is a part of the mountains, yet there is a system of valleys behind, up which we had passed. The Carmelo River follows this a part of the way. I was higher than these hills. Over them, to the northwest, lay the Bay of Monterey, calm, blue, and beautiful. Beyond were blue mountains, dim in the haze; to the east was the great Salinas plain, with the mountains beyond, dim in the blue distance. In the immediate foreground was the range of hills alluded to, the Palo Scrito, in some places covered with oats, now yellow and nearly ripe, in others black with chaparral. Behind lay a wilderness of mountains, rugged, covered with chaparral, forbidding, and desolate. They are nearly inaccessible, and a large region in there has never been explored by white men...

Later that evening, they camped by a cool stream. He wrote his brother:

I wish you could look on such a camp at night. Scattered around are pack-saddles, bread--and oh, *such* bread as we had after sixty miles' travel on a mule's back in a bag! It needed sifting to get pieces large enough for mouthfuls. The mules are picketed near



and around us. They will give the alarm if grizzlies become too familiar. Scattered on the grass around, we lie rolled in our blankets. A rifle peeps out from beneath the blankets here and there--loaded too, for, although grizzlies never molest persons asleep, it is best to have the weapons handy. The bright camp fire throws a ruddy glare on the green foliage, which shows black shadows and grim recesses back, and stately trunks and gnarled limbs shine out brighter here and there. But brighter than all, and more beautiful to me, are the stars in the deep, clear, blue sky. One is just trembling over the brow of that rugged mountain, it seems almost to touch it--others are slowly moving behind the trees, or the hills, in their majestic march to the west. The only sound to break the silence of this solitude is the murmur of the streams by us. And thus we sleep--such glorious sleep--sound and refreshing; no bad air, no close smell of feathers, no musty, ill-aired beds from which one rises in the morning with gummy eyes and heavy brain and mouth tasting as if half filled with Glauber's salts and clay.

After his visit to Pebble Beach with Whitney, Brewer and his party moved on to other regions of California. His work and the work of a number of his associates in the Sierra Nevada in 1863 and 1864 are reflected in the places they discovered and climbed. Mt. Whitney was named after Brewer's mentor and a number of other peaks were named for members of the expedition, including Brewer himself. Brewer's captaincy of the survey ended in 1864, when he received word that he had been appointed to the Chair of Agriculture in the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale, a position he held with great distinction until his retirement in 1903. In 1910, the final year of his life, a Doctor of Laws degree was conferred on him by the University of California. It was but one of many honors he received during his long and vigorous life, but it seemed particularly appropriate because of the great contributions he made as a leader of California's first geological survey.

Brewer probably never intended that his letters and journals be published, but, fortunately, he somehow found the time to jot down his impressions under the most difficult conditions. Like many visitors, the Monterey Bay area seemed particularly appealing to him, and it is through his writings that we have a rare glimpse of California a scant fifteen years after the American flag was raised in front of the Presidio customhouse.

--DLW

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## FOOTNOTES

\*Pescadero Ranch headquarters was a log house, built by a John C. Gore. Farquhar in his chapter notes quotes J. Beaumont, secretary of Del Monte Properties Company, in tracing title to the land. Gore was the original claimant against the United States for confirmation of title, based on his claim on a conveyance made in 1853, which gave him succession to the interest of Fabian Barreto, who had received the property in 1840. Gore traded the property to Tompkins, who sold it in 1862, a year after Brewer first visited the property. It was acquired by the Pacific Improvement Company, predecessor to Del Monte Properties, in 1880.

\*\*Several ancient pear trees still growing at this site are said to be survivors of the original orchard.

## SOURCES AND REFERENCES

As mentioned in the main body of the text, most of Brewer's writings were probably not intended for publication, but were sent to friends and relatives.

It is primarily because of the diligence and skill of Francis P. Farquhar, that the various pieces of correspondence were gathered, edited and published for the first time by Yale University Press in 1930 under the title "Up and Down California in 1860-1864." In an introduction to that volume, Farquhar writes:

"In preparing these letters for the press, the editor, (Farquhar) has taken certain liberties with the text which he believes Professor Brewer would have cordially sanctioned were he alive. It would be unfair to a scholar of high standing to perpetuate errors of spelling, hastily contrived sentence structure, unwitting repetition, and other trivialities, resulting from the trying conditions under which the writing was done."

Farquhar goes on to note that should anyone wish to check the exact text, reference may be made to the original manuscript which has been deposited in the Yale University Press, a second edition of "Up and Down California" was published by the University of California Press in 1949. A third edition was published in 1966, copyright, Regents of the University of California. Library of Congress Number:66-26246 and a first paperback edition was published in 1974; California Library Reprint Series Edition ISBN: 0-520-02762-0, paperback and 0-520-0203-1, cloth-bound.

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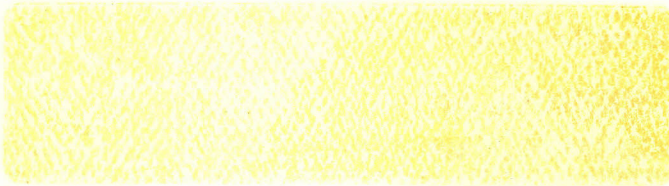
Thanks also to Pat Hathaway for the many hours spent researching, photographing and printing illustrations for Noticias. His always excellent work went uncredited in the March, 1990, issue.



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