

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Describe Cooking Area**

When Mrs. Emma Ambrosio was a child in the Boronda adobe, now the home of Dr. and Mrs. Mast Wolfson, there was a cooking area behind the house. There was a beehive shaped over, and just beside it and below on the hillside was the barbecue area. There was also a large iron stove. In the front of the stove there was a large door which could be opened and the grate pulled out a short distance. Onto this grate the hot coals were raked and the meat was put on the old spit which is now on display in one of the cases at the Stevenson House. The spit with the meat on it was placed across the opening of the stove just the right height above the coals.

Meat was never fried in the old days, according to Mrs. Ambrosio. It was either broiled over the hot coals or cooked in stews in the old iron pots, one of which has also been given to the History and Art Association by Mrs. Ambrosio, and is on display. Each part of the cooking area at the Boronda adobe was used for the preparation of certain goods.

The oven, built of stone, mortar and bricks, was for baking bread. The iron stove was used for quick cooking and general use heating water, etc. The barbecue pit was for the famous barbecues and also for items that required long, slow cooking in the old iron pots.

Well does Emma Ambrosio remember that as a child it was her job to stir slowly for hours the mixture of milk and sugar that was put in the small, old brass kettle, which is also shown in the Stevenson House display of old cooking utensils. Long cooking over low heat in the barbecue pit turned it into dulce (candy) that was so loved by the children.

Gifts to the Association from Mr. and Mrs. Myron Oliver which are being shown now in the Stevenson House exhibit are: an ancient sausage maker of wood and tin, an old wooden and tin foot warmer with the pan inside for the hot coals; and an apple peeler. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century the peeling of many bushels of apples each harvest time to prepare them for winter storage in the form of dried apples, was no small task for a New England family. Consequently the true Yankee's inventive genius brought forth the apple parer, the first hand-made model of which was made of

wood in the form of a pronged stick with a handle to turn it, mounted on a straddle board. The apple was forced on the prongs, the handle turned and a knife applied to the apple, which as it revolved, was pared. The one given by the Olivers answers this description.

Recently the New York Historical Museum exhibited a collection of early American apple parers, presented by Charles Larned Robinson. The collection totaled twenty-eight and was augmented by eight additional ones in the Society's collection. Now we have one in Monterey!

Notes from the books of Curtis and Conover Store in Monterey, about 1854, which were recently presented to the History and Art Association by Mrs. Millie Birks, will be of interest here, because of the showing of some of the articles in the current display. One frying pan of which there are two in the Ambrosia collection, cost \$1.00 each; a tin pail was priced at \$1.00; a coffee mill at \$1.25. One could buy 8 tin cups for \$1.50, and a bucket for 63 cents; a pair of scissors for 38 cents and a tea pot for \$1.25. Two dozen knives and forks were charged to a customer at \$8.00, one dozen tin plates at \$1.50 and a broom for 25 cents.

A carpenter and a painter were charged 38 cents for one pound of putty, \$3.13 for five quarts of paint oil, 25 pounds of white lead, \$4.50; and \$5 for two gallons of boiled oil. Nails were 12 cents a pound and screws were four dozen for 75 cents. A shingling hatchet cost \$1.25 and a panel door was \$4.00. Four packages of garden seed cost 75 cents. A hunter paid \$1.50 for six pounds of shot, \$1.00 for a pound of powder and two boxes of caps were 50 cents.

The Monterey Saw Mills paid \$27.00 for the hire of a four mule team for a three day trip to Salinas. The schooner Sea Bird was charged \$36.00 for seven cords of wood and \$7.00 additional for hauling the wood to the ship.

James Gardner, the public school teacher, paid \$40 for a saddle. William Curtis bought for himself 25 yards of carpeting for \$31.25. He probably was furnishing his home because on the same day, June 5, 1854, he paid \$5.50 for a rocking chair, \$7.00 for one pair of blankets, and \$7.50 for wallpaper and \$13.50 for twelve yards of silk. Wonder what the silk was for? It may have been for hangings, or a fancy bed spread.