

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **A White Lace Dress from Paris**

The late Mrs. Martha Bolton was a very special character in Monterey & Pacific Grove, before her death in King City about a year ago. She had gone to the southern part of Salinas Valley to make her home with her old friends, Dr. and Mrs. Alfred Goscinsky, three years before her final illness.

There is a lovely old white lace dress on a figure in the Custom House Museum which once belonged to Mrs. Bolton's mother, Dona Escolastica Rodrigues de Dye. Also among the historical items belonging to Monterey History and Art Association and on exhibit in the Custom house, are pictures of the owner of the dress, a large leather-covered camphor chest and almost one hundred books which once made up one of the best private libraries in the state—all printed in Spanish and beautifully bound—purchased by the Association recently. All had once been the property of Mrs. Dye.

Mrs. Bolton was 95 years old when she passed away. She was born in 1852 in Santa Clara, and moved to the Jolon area when she was but five years old, with her parents.

The King City Rustler-Herald recently printed an article about this interesting woman and much of it will be of value in the historical records of the Monterey History and Art Association and others.

"Beautiful, capricious, gay mamacita" was Mrs. Bolton's favorite type of conversation. Her mother married Job Dye, a partner of Thomas Larkin in the merchandise business in Monterey in 1848. Although her mother later married a Mr. Freeman of Watsonville, Mrs. Bolton loved to recount the days (before her birth) when Escolastica Rodriguez rode the vast acreage owned by her well-to-do father, and when she was acclaimed the most beautiful young matron in Monterey.

The Freemans bought the ranch near Jolon when Martha was a little girl and the three moved there from Monterey. A few years later Mr. Freeman died, and the two women remained on the ranch. One day two carpenters, father and son, the Boltons, came to work at the ranch. They remained to farm the place for Mrs. Freeman and built a fine old adobe which was a landmark there for years.

"In 1886 Martha and Milton Bolton (the son) married at San Luis Obispo and in 1888 their son, Harry, was born. His father and grandfather had left the ranch about two months before his birth and were never heard from again. The women managed the farm as best they could, and the growing boy helped. Harry died at the age of 20 years, Mrs. Freeman not long after, and both are buried on the ranch."

When Mrs. Bolton passed away she was placed beside her mother and her son at the Bolton ranch, now part of the Hunter Leggett Reservation. A few months ago Mrs. Goscinsky motored with Mrs. Mary Greene, curator of the Custom House and an old friend of Mrs. Bolton, to her grave in the quiet hillside of her former home.

In 1921 Mrs. Bolton traded the ranch for property in Pacific Grove, a small hotel, and the latter at a later date for a home where she spent her declining years.

It was in these days that Martha Bolton enjoyed most recognition as the daughter of the well-known Monterey Spanish-Californians. Mrs. Greene, when Mrs. Bolton was 85 years old, was hostess at a birthday party for her in the Old Custom House. On that occasion Mrs. Bolton wore the white lace gown which had been sent from Paris by the Queen la Raina de los Flores to Mrs. Dye. The story of this occasion follows:

"Escolastica Dye niece of Governor Alvarado, wore the gown when chosen by Commander Sloat to lead the grand march with him at the official ball which was held after the occupation. He had just arrived with his flagship the "Savannah," to take possession of California. He tarried in Monterey and when he returned to New York he took with him Mrs. Dye's picture to show the Easterners how beautiful were the California women." That is the dress that is now on display at the Custom House.

(More tomorrow)