

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 4, 1950

Fernando Pedro Recalls ...

Fernando Pedro has been visiting in Monterey. Mr. Pedro was born in 1880 in Casa Serrano, the old adobe on Pacific Street which was built about 1845 by Don Florencio Serrano, an alcalde under the Mexican rule. He returned to Monterey after many years' absence to visit his son, Philip Pedro, at his home in Pacific Grove. He also spent some time with his sisters, Mrs. Addie McHarry and Mrs. Annie Tomasini of Monterey and his brother, John Pedro of Seaside. He was also the brother of the late Joe Pedro.

Mr. Pedro was last here 15 years ago. For many years he and his wife have been making their home in Menlo Park where they had a ranch and raised chickens, sometimes having from a thousand to 1500 hens at one time.

Mr. Pedro is one of the old whalers of Monterey. His father was Capt. Joseph Pedro and his grandfather was Monroe Mathews. The former was one of the early day whalers, in partnership with Joseph Silvers and Antone Silvera, who were probably the last owners of the whaling company. His father, Capt. Joseph Pedro, was later the owner of the Del Monte Beer Parlor on lower Alvarado street, where the tourists always gathered to see his collection of shells, whales' teeth and bones, ivory from Alaska, and numerous other interesting items brought in from the beach and the ocean.

Mr. Pedro remembers traveling with his father along the shores of Alaska, in search of whales and otter. Once he cured and prepared the head of a killer whale for exhibition, which Stanford University later purchased for \$20, that it might be placed on exhibition in the college's natural history museum.

Mr. Pedro remembers when the Sunday attraction here was the breaking of horses on the beach and in the Lyceum grounds (ball park). He recalled that the usual winner was a man by the name of John Clempert, who wore his chestnut hair long and could speak all the languages spoken in Monterey. He used only a small short stick to train the horse he was riding. The native horsemen generally were very cruel as they broke the horses. They weighted them with many potato sacks filled with sand and when they were tired out with the

load and much running they mounted them and rode them like mad.

Mr. Pedro recalled the bull and bear fights – sometimes back of the Pacific building, sometimes at the rear of the Castro headquarters on Tyler and Pearl streets and at other times in the Lyceum grounds. When a dead whale was washed up on the beach near the Custom House, there was always at least one bear there to devour it at night. The bear was caught for the watchers and then the plans for the fight were perfected. He also remembers the knife fights that took place in his childhood near the wharf and the Custom House.

Mr. Pedro told his interested listeners during his visit to the old Custom House of the many times he had seen storms on the Monterey Bay and beach; of the time when an avalanche of fish – skip jack, yellow tail, barracuda, and salmon – were washed ashore by the thousands and the natives came in droves to collect them. He recalls the time a tidal wave washed tons of abalone on the beach, which were also collected for a feast by the residents of Monterey.

Mr. Pedro's grandfather, Monroe Mathews, was an Englishman with red hair and sideburns. It was he who started the first flour mill in Salinas. When he was preparing to return to England on a visit, Mathews made a chest covered with bear hide and filled it with money to take along with him. He died in his native land before he could send for his family to join him and the money was never recovered by his wife and family in California.

Joseph J. Hitchcock of Carmel Valley corrects this diary concerning some of the information published about the Monterey and Carmel whalers. He relates that sulphur bottom and finback whales were never harpooned until they were bombed first, for they were too large and vicious to handle. They generally were about 70 to 80 feet in length. Mr. Hitchcock's father was a member of the Carmel whalers in the early 60's when the Point Lobos whale, of which we wrote, was killed.

Mr. Hitchcock says that at that time there was some misunderstanding among the whalers and a new company was formed. Some moved into Jack Swan's, or what is now the First Theater, and other stayed at the old whaling station on Decatur Street. Among the whaling captains were Captains Pray, Manuel Silva, Marino Gonzales and Mike Noon. He also relates in his story that about 1899 A.M. Allen formed a company of

Japanese at Point Lobos with Captain Pedro in charge. It was about that time that the whale now displayed at Point Lobos was caught. It is a finback and not a sulphur bottom.