

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 7, 1950

Historic Names in Cemetery

Yesterday's Peninsula Diary told of the history of the Roman Catholic Cemetery in Monterey from the year 1839, as published in the Academy Scrapbook. Prior to this date, the records indicate that nearly all burials were in the Carmel church or cemetery. There were few burials in the Presidio Chapel but the last previous burial in a Monterey town cemetery was on August 25, 1835. In 1838, so the article relates, three persons were buried in the Campo Santa del Patrocino de San Jose del Alisal. This was at Hartnell College near the present city of Salinas.

After the blessing of the new Campo Santo, Monterey burials are entered under one of two formularies "in Campo Santo" or "in the sementerio." If these refer to the same place, and the editor believes they do, the first burial in Monterey's present cemetery was August 7, 1839, the body being that of Felipe de Jesus, infant son of Francisco Lugo and his wife, Juanna Briores.

On January 17, 1852 an indenture was made at Monterey between "the mayor ... first part and the Catholic Church of Monterey ... second part, witnesseth that the ... party of the first part, in pursuance of an ordinance ... passed by the Common Council of the said city on November 10, 1851 – in consideration of one dollar to him paid by the party of the second part ... by these presents doth ... grant to the said party of the second part all ... title ... and interest of the ... City of Monterey in ... a ... tract of land situated in Monterey ... and described as follows: The western half of the peninsula formed by the first lagoon ... measuring 1,350 feet from ... the westerly edge of the said lagoon nearly opposite the Catholic Church of San Carlos ... to ... where the land touches the opposite sides of the lagoon ... The portion thereby granted ... including the present Catholic cemetery with the walls now standing and appurtenances being the same as delineated in the ... plan attached thereto, marked: To have and to hold ... forever, provided always that the same shall be used for burial purposes only." The document was signed by Charles G. Harron, president of the Common Council and notarized by W.S. Johnson, deputy county recorder.

On April 10, 1933, the City of Monterey gave the church an unrestricted deed to 8.32 acres of this land in consideration of the release, by the church to the city,

of the lagoon frontage for a park and driveway. The east half of this tongue of land is the city's burial ground. Even in pre-American times, as is evident from the old plan, it was partially used as a non-Catholic cemetery, according to the scrapbook's article.

Father Casanova wrote in January of 1879: "In the month of March 1876 after the county surveyor had measured off part of the island (should be peninsula) which belongs to this parish of Monterey, for a Catholic Cemetery in possession since the year 1770, I enclosed for the first time the said cemetery and installed a gate. I cleared the land, put I a 50-foot well and planted one thousand trees of various kinds. In all, it cost me \$978.00."

When Church street was paved, many human bones were found and old maps show a cemetery along the north wall of the old presidio. It is known that all Monterey burials prior to 1839 were in the church building or in cemeteries quite near it.

To anyone interested enough to drive or walk through the Monterey Cemetery they could read the names of many persons who helped to make Monterey and California history. The families of the Abrego, Soberanes, Serrano, Sanchez, Hartnell, Castro, Gonzalvez and many others are resting in this historic ground, not to mention those of a later period who saw Monterey grow from a small Spanish town to the city it is today. Let's not destroy any more of the headstones that mark the graves of the departed – they were placed there by descendants and are a part of the history of California.