

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 11, 1950

### **First Centennial**

On June 3, 1870, Monterey held its first Centennial celebration in honor of its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday as an incorporated city. The festivities were under the direction of the Pioneer Society, with David Spence as the master of ceremonies. Philip A. Roche, the last alcalde and first mayor of Monterey, came down from his home in San Francisco to be the speaker of the day. A group of pioneers and former residents of Monterey had chartered "The Senator" in San Francisco and made the trip down by water, stopping at Santa Cruz to pick up guests from that neighborhood and the Santa Clara Valley. A gay time was had on board until they arrived in Monterey about 11 o'clock on the morning of the birthday.

The "Senator" tied up at the wharf and as the visitors disembarked they were greeted by the Pioneers who had formed a hollow square, and acted as a receiving line and reception committee. From there the entire body marched down Alvarado street which had been simply decorated with an avenue of pine trees. The white adobe houses had been trimmed in green with boughs of pine and cypress and everything was very gay to greet the visitors.

The march ended at the Royal Presidio Chapel of San Carlos where high mass was said with nine priests officiating at the altar. After church the procession again wended its way down Alvarado street to Colton Hall and out to Little's Grove in New Monterey where a bountiful repast was served, free of charge, by the ladies of the community. As the pilgrimage passed the Serra oak, where Father Serra had said his first mass on California soil many of them stopped and picked twigs from the tree that they might preserve them as a sacred memento of the occasion. The stump of that oak is now to be seen at the rear of San Carlos church, and the spot near the Presidio gate is marked with a granite cross.

In the files at the California State Library in Sacramento there is preserved an issue of the Alta California, dated June 12, 1870, in which the writer of an article concerning the above celebration takes issue with the author of the account of the celebration of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1870, in reference to the Arms of the City of Monterey.

The 1870 article reads: "In your account of the recent festivities at Monterey, your reporter has been misinformed in reference to the flag bearing the arms of that ancient city, which was carried in the procession. The late Lieut. Derby did not design the arms or emblazon them upon the flag. The arms were designed by a member of the City Council, and officially adopted as the arms and seal of the city in the year 1850. Lieutenant, now General Sully, inheriting some of his father's talent, as an artist and withal having a taste for heraldry, painted the arms in proper colors, or technically, emblazoned them. The flag was painted to be used in a Fourth of July procession of that year, Mr. Sully directing the whole ceremony. It being the first Fourth of July after the adoption of the State Constitution, and as the times were flush in Monterey in those days, everyone was brim full of patriotism, as you may suppose, and we all looked forward to a glorious career for Monterey.

"In our mind's eye we saw vast fleets of ships laden with rich merchandise from every quarter of the globe, riding at anchor in the fine harbor or discharging at imaginary wharves. We saw a vision of a railroad with its bridges and embankments, its engines and long train of cars carrying the aforesaid rich cargoes into the San Joaquin country and Southern mines, and returning with yellow buckskin bags, corpulent with that golden dust which has been described as so hard to get, yet harder to hold.

"We expected to rival San Francisco (or as it was sometimes called in those days, Yerba Buena); but not the faintest shadow of an iota of this beautiful vision was ever realized. Some of the grumblers blamed our worthy mayor and the common council for not ringing about the state of perfection so ardently desired. Perhaps the grumblers were right, and upon the heads of those officials must be laid the blame for allowing San Francisco to take the lead in drawing away from the ancient capital all its commerce and its prosperity. The ships would not come and the railroad consequently was not built. But some of us were so hopeful we purchased lots and kept them a good many years.

"But to return to the procession. It assembled in the plaza in front of the church, with the band of the 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry at its head, preceded by the famous banner which was carried by a character whose modesty would probably be put to blush to see himself in print, the celebrated Dennis McCarty, or "the double-breasted

child of the forest," as he called himself, who had gotten up for the occasion in leather breeches and top boots: there was also a mounted escort of young men wearing red 'bandas' or 'fajas' across the breast. It took up the march to the house of General Riley, who was waiting to receive it in full uniform, girded with the yellow sash won at Chapultepec. He was received with drums rolling and banners waving, and took his place in the line which wended its way toward Colton Hall. The ceremonies there consisted in reading the Declaration of Independence by Captain E.K. Kane of the Army, followed by a translation into the Spanish by Lieut. Hamilton; an oration by John A. McDowell (brother of the General) and some remarks in Spanish by the Rev. Padre Ramirez, in his Dominican habit, with some national airs from the band. It was an unusually fine day and we were in fine spirits and our hopes ran high.

(To Be Continued)