

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Monterey Recalled

Jack Swan, the builder of the First Theater, tells in his writings in 1878 that when he landed in Monterey on board the Soledad in 1843, there was a ten-pin alley at John F. Dye's on Calle Principal, there was a billiard table at Jose Abrego's, and not only a billiard table but there was the place where you could get a cup of good hot coffee as well. Calle Principal was the main street in the town then, most of the stores and liquor stores were there. Thomas O. Larkin, James Watson, Mendez, Dye, Chard, Belden and Joseph Harmen were all keeping stores, he says. Larkin did not sell liquor by the glass but by the bottle.

"Dr. James Stokes kept a store, general merchandise and drugs in the house where the Escolle family now live," he wrote in 1878. "David Spence kept a store on Alvarado Street, adjoining the house he lives in now and Iscara kept one in front, but on the street, that runs down between Jose Castro's house and the present stone wall behind the Washington Hotel (there was no Washington Hotel or stone wall then but only a small adobe belonging to Montenegro). Jose Abrego kept store and a billiard room in the house where his family lives now. A Frenchman named Ricardo kept a store and bakery in a small adobe house which stood on the lot that La Porte now has a brick house on. Manuel Dutra kept a saloon in his house and had most of the Indian trade. The Indians were then numerous around Monterey and Carmel, for the smallpox had not been brought to Monterey until the next Spring when they were thinned out."

In describing the residences in Monterey in 1843, Mr. Swan writes that there were but four or five two-story houses in Monterey at that time, Larkin's, Alvarado's, the one Governor Micheltorena lived in, Dr. Stokes', Antonio Osio's and Kinlock's; there were no brick houses. There was no wharf, goods from vessels being landed on the beach or on the rocks in front of the Custom House. The first wharf was built, according to his notes, in 1845, when it was built of pine cribs filled with stone, by Thomas O. Larkin, for the Mexican government.

Details of the visit of the British vice consul and a British ship are told by Mr. Swan as follows: "October 11 James Forbes, who had just received the appointment of

British Vice consul for California, arrived in Monterey, and on the 14th the British Corvette Carysfort, Capt. Lord George Paulet, arrived in Monterey from San Francisco Bay; the Governor and Consul went on board and on their return ashore, the Consul was acknowledged as the British Consul to Upper California. On the 15th, in the afternoon, about 50 men came ashore on liberty from the Carysfort and the pinball alley as well as the liquor saloons did a good business. On the 16th in the afternoon, a disturbance commenced between the liberty men and the soldiers on account of the soldiers wanting to fight, in which the soldiers got a thrashing for their pains. On the morning of the 17th, the captain of the Carysfort sent word to the Governor that if his soldiers molested his men, they must take what they got. The same afternoon 50 more men came ashore on liberty and the Mexican soldiers attacked them again and got another good thrashing."

Of the other vessels that visited Monterey that year, Mr. Swan writes: "November 11, the Schooner California and two other vessels arrived from San Francisco to clear at the Custom House; one of them had a cargo of potatoes for Mazatlan; this schooner, a small one, commanded by Captain Davis, was the first vessel built in San Francisco. She got her clearance and sailed the next day, she lost one of her crew coming in or going out of Monterey Bay. The schooner had a good passage to Mazatlan, where the vessel and cargo were sold, the potatoes at \$6 per hundred. Captain Davis returned to California next spring as a passenger on the schooner California."

"A few years previously a small schooner was built in Monterey, called the Purisimada and sent on a visit to San Francisco, and to taste peppermint tea at Yerba Buena, but the unruly bar outside the heads capsized the schooner, and with the exception of the captain, all the crew were drowned."

"About nine or ten years ago (1867 or '68) another schooner built in Monterey, was capsized in San Francisco Bay, and all hands drowned, and in 1873 a wheat vessel was lost on the bar in fine weather. The press of San Francisco often talk about the boys of that city, is it not time they talked about buoys for their bar, for it needs buoying as well as their harbor in front of the wharves needs dredging." And that is what Jack Swan thought of San Francisco Bay in 1878.