

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Some Early Doctors**

Dr. Garth Parker told the members of the Monterey Historical Society at their last meeting held in Salinas at the home of Mrs. F.S. Baker, of the history of the hospitals and the medical men of the early days in the county.

After reviewing the lives of the medical men in Salinas and the hospitals there, Dr. Parker said: "Dr. Gonzales was the first doctor to practice in Gonzales, but he did not practice long. He was a very wealthy man. He had attended Cooper Medical school, and it was rumored that while he was there as a student a large British syndicate was negotiating for the purchase of his ranch. During classes he would receive telegrams of offers from this syndicate, which were delivered to him in class, and he would write his reply giving it to the messenger boy who had brought him the first wire. During an examination, the messenger boy arrived, so the story goes, and Dr. Gonzales gave him a list of the questions from the examinations. Shortly, the boy returned with the answers which had been written by a couple of medical students in a rooming house nearby."

"Dr. Dozier was the first to practice in King City, and he deserves great approbation for the work he did in getting patients in and out of there. He was called into the Jolon section and discovered upon his arrival that it was necessary to do a Caesarian section. He collected all the white thread available and sterilized it; put all the sheets he could find in the oven; taught an old Indian woman to give chloroform and went to work. Both the mother and the child lived.

"The practice of medicine in those days," to quote Dr. Parker, "was not easy. All confinements were made in the homes, which in one way was better, but if complications arise it is better to be where expert assistance is available. My father, Dr. John Parker, went down the coast one time and delivered triplets alone, and there was no publicity given to the event as would have been the case today. In the horse and buggy days the mud in the valley was really a problem and a handicap.

"There was an epidemic of diphtheria during 1876 and 1877, and 120 children died in this county alone. During the present time that great loss could have been

combated by the use of vaccinations and serums, as we now can combat typhoid and other diseases of this type. In those days there was nothing. It was thought that the diphtheria epidemic was caused by faulty sanitation, and a great effort was made to clear the water."

The County Medical Society was organized in 1904, and there are two charter members still living, Dr. Garth Parker and Dr. Brummer of King City. "There were about twenty doctors in Monterey County in that year and now there are more than 150. There are between 125 and 130 members in the Monterey County Medical Society at the present time. The number of doctors in the county has probably doubled since the war," according to Dr. Parker. "These doctors all come well prepared and well trained. The old time doctor had two years of medical school, with no internship. He was turned directly out on the public and it was a wonder he did as well as he did. The old doctors deserve a great deal of credit; there were no x-rays, no blood transfusions, and none of the present day saving devices." So ended Dr. Parker's talk.

A.C. Jochmus says in his book on Monterey that a surgeon by the name of Pedro Prat accompanied an early expedition to Monterey in 1769 but he returned to Mexico the following year. Other medical men in Monterey from 1773 to 1884 were Pedro Castan, Jose Davila, who stayed from 1774 to 1783; Pablo Carbajal was here from 1791 to 1800 and Jose Castillo remained from 1792 to 1816. Manuel Torres stayed one year, Jose Maria Benites four years, and Manuel Quijano from 1807 until 1824. Manuel de Alva came in 1831 and remained nine years. He was followed in succession by Manuel Crespo, Edward Bale and Faustino Moro.

Francisco Torres, a Mexican, was in practice at Monterey in 1835; John Townsend and Andres Castellero signed a certificate of ill health as "profesores de medicina" in March 1846. In 1785 the vice regal government transmitted to Monterey 20 copies of a treatise on smallpox, which had been sent from Spain, and ordered their distribution among the people, and in 1797 the visory ordered that precautions against that disease should be enforced.

In May, 1844, the smallpox was brought to Monterey. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May the ayuntamiento (common council) determined to establish a hospital for the poor patients. A board of health was appointed as follows: Thomas O. Larkin, David Spence, Watson and Osio, presided over

by Serrano. A house on the outskirts was rented at a monthly rental of eight dollars.

The governor agreed to give \$125 monthly during the continuance of the epidemic; Governor Micheltoarena individually gave \$25; the Bishop, \$25; Larkin, \$5; and 25 others from \$1 to \$4 each. The total monthly promised amount was \$249 and that was the first hospital established in California.

The ayuntamiento of Monterey in 1835 appointed a commission to select a burying ground for foreigners separate from that for resident Catholics. On the 31st of July, 1839, the cemetery of Monterey was consecrated, having been in use since 1770. It was 60 varas square; the wall was built by the convicts, under the auspices of Governor Alvarado.