

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Pictures Help Trace History of Monterey

Ninety-five pencil drawings and water-color sketches depicting scenes in California in the early years of American occupation and statehood made by William Rich Hutton, who came to California in 1847 as a clerk to his uncle, an Army paymaster, have been preserved and published by the Huntington Library.

The published collection is entitled "California, 1847-1852". One of these drawings, dated June 5, 1847, played a prominent part of the discovery of the old site of the flag pole at the Custom House, previous to the 1946 celebration commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the raising of the United States flag there by Commodore John Drake Sloat on July 7th, 1846.

Wishing to make the re-enactment of the historical event as authentic as possible, the State Parks Commission, assisted by the National Parks Service and the University of California, through the encouragement of the Monterey History and Art Association, began a thorough search for the original setting for the pole.

Dr. Aubrey Neasham, regional historian of the National Parks Service, came to Monterey with a group of scientists, to study the problem. It had been thought by several historians that the pole had been on the ground at the northeast corner of the Custom House when the flag was raised there in 1846.

It was William Rich Hutton's survey and drawings now in the possession of the Huntington Library, that proved the point and led to the eventual discovery of the remains of the original pole set in a rock cairn five and one half feet off the northeast corner. This site was shown in the Hutton drawing made in Monterey in 1847.

Mrs. Mary Greene, curator of the Custom House, had been sent a set of tracings of the Hutton drawings by a visitor to the building, and later she was able to obtain a copy from the Huntington Library of the published book.

The Monterey History and Art Association board of directors inspected the drawing and immediately voted to ask the Park Commission to move the pole from the northwest corner of the building to the original setting. It was then that Dr. Neasham and a group of archaeologists came to Monterey and began

excavations, and to everyone's delight, found the historic proof. The original cairn and a piece of the old pole, are now a valuable part of the State's Historic Caravan which has been traveling up and down California these past two Centennial years.

With William Rich Hutton's picture in his hand, Dr. Neasham went to the Presidio of Monterey and endeavored to find the spot from which the picture of Monterey as it looked on June 5th 1847, had been drawn. Hutton had written in one corner: "Monterey, California, from the old Fort —". At the top of the drawing he had identified "Custom House and Church", "new butcher shop", "Capt. Wolter's" and "Garner's". and in the right hand corner "our house." By sighting across the bay toward the church, it was definitely determined where to start the excavation.

In all there are eighteen pictures of the Monterey Peninsula in the book "California, 1847-1852" reproduced from the originals. The list includes: three drawings of Carmel Mission from several angles, one of "Monterey in 1847 from Jones' Fort"; "San Carlos church, Monterey" before it was stuccoed; "Main street, Monterey, near the Custom House"; identifying Captain Wolter's, "Don Manuel and Dona Augustous Jumino's", and the "Astor House" which must have been the present Pacific Building; another of "Monterey in 1848 from in front of our (Garner's) house".

Plate No. 33 is a close-up of the Custom House in 1848 showing "El Gabilan (or El Toro)" in the background. On the same page is a view of Monterey from in front of the Garner House showing the Whaling Station without a balcony and the First Brick House. "The Slaughter Ground" and "Trying Out Tallow," Monterey have no date but have a bit more detail worked in than the other drawings. There are three pictures of "Monterey Redoubt" drawn on November 6th, 1848. The "Washerwomen's Huts, near the church" and two drawings showing Monterey as it looked to the young surveyor in 1849, are most interesting. The last picture was drawn in 1849 also and identifies the church, General Riley's, Captain Wolter's, the Astor House, all in the handwriting of the artist, and the First Theatre is easily recognized.

Accurate and artistic drawings of scenes in California from the time of the American conquest to the Gold Rush are not common. There were few persons in California, during those years, who had the training or inclination to make a record, with pencil or brush, of

what they saw, according to the introduction to "California, 1847-1852" written by Willard O. Waters.

The drawings were made during a residence of nearly six years in California, were carefully preserved by Hutton throughout a long professional career, and remained in the possession of the family after his death in 1901. In 1939 they were brought to the notice of the Huntington Library and were acquired from one of the artist's daughters, Mary A. Hutton, who then lived in the family home in Montgomery County, Maryland.