

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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W.R. Hutton, Early Surveyor

William Rich Hutton, the young surveyor who made the maps of Monterey in 1847 about which we wrote on Friday, and one of which was used to locate the site for the original flagpole on which the United States flag was flown for the first time in 1846, was born in Washington, D.C., March 21, 1826. He obtained his education in the private schools of Washington and Alexandria and apparently had special training in mathematics, drawing and surveying. He came to California in 1841 with his uncle, William Rich, a botanist and paymaster of the United States volunteer forces being sent for occupation of California. Young William Hutton was employed as paymaster's clerk.

In July, 1849, Hutton, although still in government service, was permitted to obtain additional private employment, and turned to surveying. With Lieutenant Edward C. Ord, for whom Fort Ord was named, he went to Los Angeles and assisted in the first survey and mapping of the pueblo and its outlying lands. Ord and Hutton's original map of Los Angeles is still preserved in that city's archives.

Returning to Monterey, Hutton was employed in the adjutant's office until the spring of 1850. He became county surveyor of San Luis Obispo County and surveyed many of the large ranches there, besides preparing the first survey and map of the town of San Luis Obispo. In August of 1851 he resigned as county surveyor to accept the post of assistant to his friend, Captain Henry W. Halleck, who had become superintendent of the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine in Santa Clara County. He apparently remained there and in San Francisco until he returned east in March, 1853.

Back in Washington, Hutton at once engaged in engineering work, his first position being that of assistant engineer for the survey and location of the Metropolitan Railroad from Georgetown, D.C., to Point of Rocks, Maryland, near Harpers Ferry. In 1855 he was assistant engineer on the Washington Aqueduct and in 1862 he became assistant engineer of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and of the Western American Railroad. In 1880 he went to New York City where he was in charge of the construction of the Washington Bridge over the Harlem River and of the Hudson River Tunnel, 1889-1891. He served as consulting engineer on various

important projects and was a member of the American, British and French engineering societies. He passed away on December 11, 1901, survived by his widow, Mary Augusta Clopper Hutton, and five children. It was from his daughter, Miss Mary Hutton, that the Huntington Library was able to procure his drawings made in California and many of his letters and diaries.

During his stay in Monterey, William Rich Hutton wrote the following: "The Rev. Walter Colton, Chaplain in the Navy, builder of Colton Hall and elected alcalde of Monterey; the town hall, Colton Hall, was built by him, and contained the only ball room in the town, although the 'sala' in the private homes was generally large enough for the very respectable dances. Many 'bailes' were given in it (Colton Hall) by the officers and others, which were always well attended. Paz azules, 'la jota' and 'el son' were danced in the intervals between the waltzes – the latter being the national dance – in which the women were more graceful than I have elsewhere seen. I once heard the remark that the Yankee officers were mean – that instead of buying chickens and turkeys (rare birds in those days) that they would go to the Salinas plains and shoot wild geese for the supper. But this was a single instance – and the best feeling existed between the Americans and the Californians both men and women – once the condition and fate of the country was decided.

"Judge Colton was an active administrator of his office and was able always to maintain good order. Though a very small man, he was fearless and armed with the cane, his badge of office, he would enter the gambling rooms alone, and confiscate the bank. The gamblers – always Americans – liked him too, though they kept a sharp watch to give notice of his approach.

"At a later period, perhaps in 1849, a dreadful outrage had been committed, and the perpetrator, a desperate American, after being arrested had broken out of jail – a log calaboose – and fled to the mountains of Carmelo. The police force sent to arrest him, found him in a cave protected by a breastwork of trees and bristling with several rifles. They feared to approach him, although a reward was offered for his apprehension.

Jerry was confined in the calaboose, as I remember, for having somebody else's horse. As the judge went through his tour of inspection, Jerry remarked, "Judge if you want to catch Bill, I'll take you for him." "You Jerry?" said Colton. "Yes, Judge, but you'll have to let me out of this and give me a gun and a horse."

“It was rather a startling proposition, but after a few moments thought Colton consented, recalling the proverb ‘set a thief to catch a thief.’ Jerry was furnished with a horse and gun, and disappeared. After three or four days, when it was surmised that he had joined the outlaw, he returned with his prisoner bound. This made him a hero. He was made the police force of Monterey and for some years was most active in the quest of criminals and the preservation of the peace but after a while the ruling passion proved too strong, he took to horse stealing, I believe, or some crime for which he was deposed and locked up – and was lost to view.”

The original of the above writing is in the Huntington Library and a photostat copy is in the files of the Monterey Library.