

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 14, 1950

### **Sloat Monument Dedicated**

Forty years ago today the monument to Commodore John Drake Sloat was dedicated on the hillside at the Presidio of Monterey. After nearly twenty years of planning, Major Edwin A. Sherman saw his dream come true. To Sherman's efforts alone was the erection of the huge monument due.

He spent ten years in getting Congress to make its first appropriation for such a monument outside of the National Capital, and in securing and placing the stones from 35 counties, cities, organizations and individuals. There are 66 granite blocks in all.

In the Daily Review of March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1907 there appeared this item:

A dispatch from Washington states that the U.S. Senate has passed the House bill appropriating ten thousand dollars for the completion of the Sloat Monument on the military reservation at Monterey. This will be good news for the people of Pacific Grove and Monterey as they have long been anxious for the completion of the project in honor of the man who first raised the American flag on the Pacific coast, and wrested an empire from Mexico.

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1910, Sherman wrote a letter to the editor of the Monterey Daily Cypress:

"Dear Sir: I congratulate you and the patriotic citizens of Monterey and of California in general that work is soon to be commenced on the superstructure of the Sloat Monument and pushed to completion, as I learn from the contractor, W.W. Blanchard.

"The Grand Lodge of Masons of California, which laid the cornerstone on July 7, 1896, will dedicate it, as did the Grand Lodge of Masons of the District of Columbia the Washington Monument at the National Capital. Monterey can then rejoice with the people of this state, who will come to the ancient capital of California, made a thousandfold more historic, where its first constitution was framed and civil representative government here first established.

"The army and navy will be represented, on bay and shore, and in the unveiling of the monument by young ladies selected for the ceremony, who will receive their orders from another young lady, representing

Columbia, a lineal descendant of Francis Scott Key, the author of our national anthem, 'The Star Spangled Banner.'

"It will be a happy event ... to know that the present commandant, Colonel E. W. Mason of the Eighth Infantry, who will do the honors of the Presidio, is the first American native son of California to command that post. He was born at San Diego March 11, 1854. His father was the late General John L. Mason, U.S.A.

"Captain Murray Baldwin, also of the Eighth Infantry at the Presidio of Monterey, was born in San Francisco September 15, 1872. His mother is the daughter of Francis Scott Key.

"Isn't it making 'Old Glory' resplendent at the Old Capital of California, where it was raised by Commodore Sloat.

"It I belonged to Monterey Parlor of the Native Sons I would see that no sea weed or kelp floated ashore before they were enrolled as honorary members for the history to go into the Old Custom House; at least while the people see the fish that come and the fish that go, and where the whales have the right to blow. But I am getting into deep water. Yours very truly, Edwin A. Sherman."

In the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> the city council, headed by Mayor Will Jacks, met at the Custom House to welcome the commanding officer of the naval battalion, including the "Yorktown". There was firing of salutes from the vessels of war in the harbor and artillery on shore. A flag was again raised at the Custom House by Commander Victor Blue, senior officer, commanding the squadron. Sloat's Proclamation was read by Ensign George Joerms.

When the United States flag was raised at the Old Custom House, Commodore Sloat and his men were deprived of the dramatic details of lowering the Mexican flag, for the simple reason that the Mexicans had outwitted them. The red and green ensign had been lowered several weeks before the Americans arrived.

It was carried to Mission San Jose where Salvador Vallejo was commissioned. A daughter of Don Salvador rescued a piece of the red bunting – the green portion having faded and worn thin – and presented half of it to Major Edwin R. Sherman – the officer who initiated and pushed through to completion the Sloat Monument.

Years later Major Sherman presented his portion to the Monterey city council. It now reposes in the Custom House State Museum, loaned by the council, together with an explanatory letter.