

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 21, 1950

Alberto Trescony

Mrs. John Cooper of the Carmel Valley, the granddaughter of the late Alberto Trescony, owner of the Washington Hotel in 1849, is very happy to talk of her grandfather and the tales told to her by her mother, Mrs. R.F. Johnson, who was a daughter of Mr. Trescony.

Mrs. Cooper was told in her childhood that her grandfather left his native home in Domodossola, Italy, because of an unkind stepmother. He arrived in Paris at the age of 12 years and became an apprentice in the tinsmith trade. When he was 14 he became a cabin boy on a journey around the Horn with Captain William A. Leidesdorff and eventually arrived in Monterey.

Mrs. Johnson fascinated her three daughters with stories of seeing her father weigh pure gold dust upon tiny scales to pay his help and other obligations, in the early days of Monterey. He always requested his family, so Mrs. Johnson recalled, not to ask him questions about his early life for the reason that it had been so unpleasant. He married Catherine Cotton Rainey, a native of England, who had arrived in Monterey with her husband, Edward Rainey, and a young son, from Australia. Mr. Trescony and Mrs. Rainey fell very much in love and were married. She passed away twenty-six years before the death of Mr. Trescony, a sorrow from which he never completely recovered. Descendants of the son of Edward and Catherine Rainey are still residing in Monterey County.

William A Leidesdorff, with whom Albert Trescony came to Monterey, according to family information, was a member of a committee which supervised the opening on April 3, 1848, of the first public school in California after the American occupation, in Portsmouth Square in San Francisco, under the direction of Thomas Douglas, a Yale graduate. From this school has grown the public school system of California.

John C. Fremont made his first public appearance in Monterey in January, 1846, when, with William A. Leidesdorff, U.S. Sub-Consul at San Francisco, he paid a visit to Thomas Oliver Larkin, the first American Consul to Monterey.

An old scrap book and diary, dated 1885, which was compiled by Felipe Gomez, first postmaster of Monterey, is in the historical collection in the Old

Custom House. In that small book I have found a clipping, undated, but of interest nevertheless, because it concerns the Washington which at that time was still standing.

"More than half a century ago an Italian named Tresconi thought a hotel in the thriving Spanish town of Monterey would be a good business venture. Foreigners were not in much demand in Monterey in those days, for Alvarado was governor and his accession to power had been so irregular, to put it mildly, that he was exceedingly jealous and suspicious of everybody, especially foreigners. But this Italian was careful not to dabble in politics, so his presence was tolerated," according to "Monterey's Old Inn, Memories of Washington Hotel."

"The adobe for the many hundreds of blocks used in this pretentious structure was dug out of the hill back of the church of San Carlos. The bricks were mixed and dried by native Californians and Mexicans, and the heavy timbers which still support the roof were hewn from trees existing on the proposed site of the building. The hotel, which was over a year in building, was and still is the largest adobe building in Monterey. It is three and a half stories high and over 200 feet in length, with a breadth of about fifty feet. In the building were accommodations for over one hundred people, and everyone predicted an empty exchequer for the sanguine Italian.

"In the old days the house fairly radiated hospitality. The adobe walls were covered with whitewashed plaster and the small-paned windows blinked cheerfully in the sunlight.

"Early in 1840, Governor Alvarado pretended to receive information of a deep laid plot to overturn the government. Castro was ordered to arrest all connected with the conspiracy and, by a strategic movement, succeeded in surprising and arresting nearly 100 persons, principally Americans. The hotel was searched. Every room was entered and the suspects were hurried off in chains to San Blas. There is no room for concealment in the tiny sleeping apartments which line each side of the long corridors. With a bed and a bureau in the little room and a soldier inside the door, there must have been no space for the unfortunate occupant. The window-sill was the most commodious place in the room and that was on the outside."