

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 7, 1950

### **When Life Was Cheap**

A very good friend, who wished to remain anonymous, has given to the Peninsula Diary some delightful stories of the early days in Monterey which we hope will provoke a chuckle now and then among our readers – we think they are entertaining, humorous and so typical.

Life was fairly cheap in Monterey in the early '70's and no one bothered much when an Indian or two was killed. But when an Indian took a shot at John Martin when we was going home over the hill to Carmel, that was going too far. White men were not so plentiful as Indians. So the Indian was clapped into jail.

A short while later, two Indians came upon a white man lying asleep under a tree up Carmel Hill and cut his throat. Both of them were put in jail, although one of them declared his complete innocence, as he had merely held the man while his friend had cut the man's throat.

Now the jail held three Indians, and the sheriff was intending to hold a trial – such a waste of time and money! So one day as the sheriff was sitting quietly in the front room of the jail, a couple of his friends came in and sat talking to him. A few more came in and then still more, until the sheriff remarked upon the unusual amount of company he seemed to be enjoying. Thereupon, a couple of his friends behind him grabbed his arms, while the others tied him fast to his chair.

They took his keys and got the three prisoners out of jail and into the yard behind the jail. They stood them on three barrels under a beam that projected out of the jail wall, and with nooses around their necks, threw the other ends of the rope over this beam, kicked away the barrels, and there they were, all nicely and expeditiously finished up. The sheriff was released, but of course had not seen anything done, and couldn't do anything about it anyway. And Indians were much more careful to pick on other Indians after that when the need to do a bit of killing overcame them.

San Carlos Day was always an occasion for wild celebration. After services in the Old Mission Church there was revelry unrestrained. There was one huge Indian from the Valley, very tall and very broad. The festivities of the day had been a bit too much for him

and he was leaning against a tree, sleeping his dissipation off. Along came another reveler with a friend, also the worse for drink, and the sight of this huge man asleep was too much for them, so, coming up behind him, they ran a sharp knife just inside the collar bone, severing the jugular vein. They had nothing against him, but the opportunity offered, so why not! One of them got away out of the country and was gone two years. When he finally returned, the sheriff was informed and he was quite disgusted. "The darn fool. Why didn't he stay away! Now I suppose I'll have to hang him."

The general principal of justice in those days ran about as follows: If an Indian killed a white man, hang him of course. If a white man killed an Indian, good! One less Indian, still better. Hang him, and that made two Indians the less.

This little story could well be entitled "One Must Be Up-to-Date": Marcelina Dutra could remember when the young gallants of Monterey with red sashes about the waist and the full white shirts, ran races up on the Mesa, back of the church. Nice girls were not supposed to look at the boys racing up on the Mesa but rest assured that nice girls saw them just the same. And Marcelina lived until the day when nice girls went to the polls with the men to cast their ballots.

In spite of her background of Old Monterey, Marcelina was determined to throw off tradition and be as modern as any, so she went to her young friend, Francisco to be instructed in the mystery of casting a vote. On returning from her first experience at the polls she went to Francisco to report.

"Francisco," she said, "do I have to tell my name when I vote? I go into the room and there sits Blanco Diaz, looking so beeg. And he says "WHO are you?, and me knowing him since he was born! And I says to him, "You know very well who am I. And I goes in and votes."