

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 19, 1951

### **St. James of Old Monterey**

On New Year's Day of 1951 St. James Episcopal church on Pacific Street in Monterey was partially destroyed by fire. Because of this disaster to this, the oldest protestant church on the Monterey Peninsula, we have chosen it for the topic of historical interest for the Diary today.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. William Ingraham Kip, the beloved Bishop of California in the middle 1850's, left a record for those who might follow his ministrations, in this, then small community, of the west. We find the following items under date of "July thirtieth, eighteen-hundred and fifty-four. The services of our church had never been held in Monterey. Some years ago on the first occupancy of the town by the Americans, the Rev. Calvin (Walter) Colton, chaplain in the U.S. Navy, a Congregational minister, was stationed here. He was appointed Alcalde and while here erected a stone building for the Town Hall. It is one of the most substantial public buildings in California.

"On Sunday morning for our service we had the court room in Colton Hall, the room in which the convention which adopted the first constitution of this State held its meetings.

"The Congregation numbered about 60 and at the Holy Communion four came forward, some of whom had not for a long time enjoyed that privilege. In the afternoon the attendance was much larger as many of the Spanish ladies came in to witness the services although unacquainted with the language.

"After the second lesson I baptized five children; and having given in place of the sermon an extemporaneous address explanatory of Confirmation, I conferred that rite on one young lady who that morning had received communion for the first time.

"In the early part of the week I visited many of the Americans, particularly those who had brought their children for baptism.

"They all expressed themselves anxious to have the services of the church, but they are too few in number to take any steps toward this, nor is there any reason to suppose that Monterey will increase or strengthen its American population. In fact since my visit it has

diminished, and the removal of Mrs. Boston's family, has taken away the only one of any influence.

"Twelve miles distance, on the Salinas plains, I am told, an agricultural population is settling, but of course it is scattered at the ranches."

It might be interesting to relate here a bit about the history of the Boston family. They were in Monterey in the early 1850's. Joseph Boston, the son of Alice Cecelia Wells Boston, had two sisters, Alice Ann and Josephine Elizabeth. His aunt was Helen Mary Wells Williams and his two cousins, Edward L. Williams and Charles Williams. His sister Alice married Aime Donzel at Monterey on January 12, 1853; and Josephine Elizabeth married Robert George in Santa Cruz in 1858. Joseph Boston married in 1862, Eliza C. Bul. His cousins Edward and Charles, were well known in Monterey County. Edward L. Williams married Narcissa Watson and their daughter married Charles Pioda of Salinas. Their son, Paul Pioda is a practicing attorney in Salinas.

Joseph Boston's mother, and his aunt, Mrs. Williams, lived in Santa Cruz during their later life. They were English born. A year or so ago a marble top teakwood table which had been in the Boston family during their life in Monterey was presented to the Custom House Museum.

In March of 1875, the Rev. J.S. McGowan, the builder of St. James writes in the old record book of the church: My first service at Monterey was given in the dance hall of the old Washington Hotel on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1875, to a congregation of forty souls. At my next three appointments I had no congregation – but I still continued my appointments – and soon the services became an established fact.

"It was soon after St. Paul's church, Salinas City, (located upon the Salinas plains) was opened for Divine Service that I started this mission at Monterey."

On May 2, 1875 the Rev. McGowan wrote: "It was soon considered advisable to erect a church building, and as there was no other protestant house of worship in the town, all united in faithful and earnest work for the accomplishment of that purpose.

"The church building was erected in the fall of 1876 and was consecrated by Bishop Kip on July 14, 1878.

St. James Church was built before the railroad and before Hotel Del Monte was a reality.

Bishop Kip ended his report of the founding of St. James with the following line: "May its light spread and its life abound with good work."