

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Store Ledgers Reveal History

Yesterday we wrote of the findings in the history of the making and shipping of cheese from Monterey, as discovered in the ledgers of the Curtis and Conover Store in Monterey in the early 1850's. It would now be interesting to repeat some of the data we have collected on the history of this early store.

A year ago Mrs. Millie Birks presented the Monterey History and Art Association with a valuable collection of 24 items of early books and records of the City of Monterey.

Among the gifts are 10 volumes of store records. The gift covers cash records of June 3, 1851, to October 30, 1852. The invoice book covers the period from June 3, 1851 to November 1, 1852. From it we learn that from June 3, 1851, to April 1, 1852, William Curtis and Milton Little were partners, but in April 1852, they dissolved partnerships, and it was probably then that Milton Little established his own store, and Curtis continued alone.

The day books and ledgers cover the period from May 1853 to 1867. Some volumes are missing, but in those we have there is a story of Monterey. Stores in that period often acted in somewhat the same capacity as banks of the present day. There are records of transaction for board and room, real estate deals, shipping records, and the records of wharf income.

After dissolving partnership in April of 1852, Mr. Curtis seems to have opened a store again in May of 1853. Then in June of the same year Simpson Conover is credited with \$2,021 and in July with \$274.22, both accounts in cash. It is probable that it was at this time that Conover became a partner of Curtis, because from then on it was called Curtis and Conover.

In the first ledger, marked A, there is almost a census of Monterey, according to Mrs. Kneass, the curator of the Stevenson House, who has made a study of the books. The customers were mainly the citizens of American extraction, while the names of the older Spanish and Mexican families are not as prevalent as for the first year.

It was on January 3, 1907 (Thursday that year) that The Daily Review, published in Pacific Grove, carried a story on the front page in three-quarter inch type, of the

intention of the Monterey-Fresno railway to lay tracks within the City of Monterey immediately.

Silas Mack, the attorney for the company, asked that the board of trustees of Monterey grant the railway company permission to commence construction of their road within the city. The road was never completed.

On the evening of January 2nd, 1907, there has been an adjourned meeting of the directors of the Pacific Grove Museum, according to the Daily Review. Present were Dr. Harold Heath, president; J.P. Pryor, vice president; John Ivey, acting secretary, and Rev. Dr. Bennett. It was voted that the museum be open to the public free of charge, five days of the week. On Mondays a fee of 25 cents would be charged. Saturdays would be considered children's days and "residents and children will be cordially welcomed and receive special attention."

At the meeting Miss Norton asked to be relieved of the duties of general curator, that she might devote herself especially to the department of botany.

The museum would remain closed for a few days, the paper announced, for the arrangement and classification of the large donation of shells from F.A. Woodworth. He was also the donor of several volumes of valuable scientific books.

The Daily Review makes a prediction: "There is generally awakened interest in the museum, which is extending far beyond the immediate locality and it is evident that the institution is destined to rapidly become the most important factor in the attractions of the Grove both from a popular and scientific standpoint." That was in 1907. In 1951 the prediction has come true, we are sure.

In the same issue of the Pacific Grove Daily Review we find that the city officials in 1907 were O.S. Trimmer, president of board of trustees; J.P. Pryor, D.T. Welsh, W.T. Hearst and W.H. Hill. City clerk and assessor was J.R. Patrick, T.A. Work and city treasurer and E.B. Rich was superintendent of streets. T.J. Field was chairman of the county board of supervisors.