

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 25, 1951

### In 1846

In the files of the Monterey History and Art Association and presented to the Custom House Museum has come a copy of the diary of Sgt. Joshua S. Vincent, Company I of the First New York Infantry Volunteers in the war with Mexico, 1846 to 1848. Seventy-two pages of typewritten copy was sent to Monterey by the transcriber, Chris D'Amanda of Pultneyville, New York, class of 1952, Phillips Exeter Academy, N.H. The original is the possession of H. Darcy Curwen. It is written in script with pen and ink to the date March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1847. From that date until the end it is written in pencil.

The gift came from Mr. D'Amanda through Ben F. Dixon, curator of the San Diego Historical Society, who had instructions to present four copies with the transcriber's compliments to the California Historical Society, San Francisco, Dr. Robert G. Clelland, Occidental College, Los Angeles, Huntington Library, San Marino; and to Monterey. We are in good company!

The presentation of this document to these several institutions and museums will help considerably toward making the contents available to California historians. It was a very commendable thing to do and we thank Mr. D'Amanda for his generosity.

Sergeant Vincent opens his diary at Elmira, New York, July 20, 1846, when he started with others to join Capt. W.E. Shannon's company. According to the annotations which accompanied the diary there is no information in the Historical Society files on Joshua Vincent nor does Bancroft give any information other than he was living in Linn Creek, Missouri, in 1882.

The regiment set sail from New York harbor, sailing in three vessels – Susan Drew, Loo-Choo and Thos H. Perkins. The Sloop of War Preble went along as convoy. Company I was on board the Susan Drew. The journey was made to California around the Horn, landing at Monterey on April 3, 1847.

“On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Sergeant Vincent wrote in his diary. “Went aboard the Lexington with Cos. D, G, and E to go to Monterey. Weighed anchor about 4 o'clock and went outside the bay.”

This first description of Monterey is interesting. “Were landed at 1 o'clock, marched through town of Monterey and encamped on a beautiful green in front of the

Catholic Church. The town of Monterey is beautifully situated on the bay of Monterey. The surrounding scenery is beautiful in the extreme. The hills covered with pine and the lower land covered with scattered live oak and beautiful green grass, which gives it the appearance of an old orchard. Monterey and the surrounding country is one of the most lovely spots I ever beheld. There is one drawback to this beautiful picture and that is not the least sign of civilization so far as I have yet observed.”

Ten days elapse before the sergeant again wrote in his diary. On April 13<sup>th</sup> he noted “Last Friday evening a grand ball was given in the barracks by the officers of the Navy and Army. It is said to have been a splendid affair. The schooner William had been tried and condemned as a lawful prize. The Cyane came in today in fine style. She fired a salute of 13 guns and was answered by the Columbus.

“Sunday is a holiday here among the Spaniards. The town has been flooded with them all day. The day is opened by cock fighting and gambling. I have seen it one time today in the open field between 2 and 3 hundred Spaniards and Indians gambling and playing at different games. The day is closed by a dance in the evening.”

On May 5, Sgt. Vincent reports the first war news since the arrival of the volunteers in California. After the usual ceremonies of morning parade Col. Stevenson stepped in front of the regiment and said: “The news from below (Pueblo de los Angeles) warrants me in saying that we may expect service and that immediately in that quarter Companies E and G are ordered to hold themselves in readiness in order to board the U.S. ship Lexington at a moment's notice.” At 9 o'clock that day the men embarked.

There were social activities in Monterey in 1847. Sgt. Vincent reports a dance on May 18 at the home of (Mrs. Bartels, deleted) Mrs. Egers and he was agreeably surprised to find three or four beautiful American women. It was refreshing he wrote, to hear them speaking such plain English. There was a rumor, he continues that Col. Stevenson's camp had been surprised by General Castro at Pueblo and a large number killed and that Company I would be ordered down there immediately.

(More tomorrow)