

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 29, 1951

Funeral in 1847

The last entry made by Sgt. Joshua S. Vincent was dated Nov. 25th, 1847, during his stay in Monterey with the First New York Infantry Volunteers in the War with Mexico, 1846-1848.

On the 18th of that month the sergeant described the military funeral of Lieutenant Miner. The San Diego Historical Society writes in the annotations that the description is very fine, if simple, of a military funeral of 1847, Lieutenant Miner was a member of Co. F, 3rd Art'y Topographical engineer. Bancroft says: "Lieutenant Miner died in August of a malignant disease brought from Manila on the Columbus, from which nine other soldiers died."

The description of the service follows: "Have just returned from the burial of Lieutenant Miner. Company F. turned out the proper escort under arms remainder (all in full uniforms) wearing only side arms. First in the procession was the escort, next the "musick," next the bier and the pall bearers, next the captain, etc, next the remainder of Co. F., next the Co. I in uniform wearing side arms, next the sailors from the Dale & Warren, next the Marines from the same ships, next Colonel Mason and staff and several naval officers, next citizens. The procession marched along to the grave to the tune of Boyne Water with muffled drums.

"The Southampton U.S. store ship, arrived here yesterday from Norfolk."

It is interesting to note here that Topographical Engineers, a find corps, was established by an act of Congress of July 5, 1838.

It was a special corps of engineers to be assigned for exploring and mapping purposes for duty with other military units. Prior to this, the act of March 3, 1813, authorized eight of these engineers with eight assistants. They did most of the mapping of the trans-Mississippi west. This information came from the "Legislative History of the General Staff of the Army of the U.S. from 1775 to 1901.

"A tribe of wild Indians from the Tulares arrived here today to treat with Colonel Mason," Sergeant Vincent relates in his diary on Aug. 19. "The chief of the tribe of Indians is called Capt. Carlos. His tribe lives in Tulares.

They came into town bearing the branches of trees on their shoulders.

They were nearly naked. They carried bows and quivers of arrows slung on their backs. Their ornaments were of the most uncouth kind. Some wore around their necks strings of little pieces of bone, some with sticks run through their nose, some with a little stick covered with fur and tipped with quail's top-knots stuck in each ear standing forward, resembling the horns of an ox."

In the next entry Sergeant Vincent regrets that he has neglected the journey for so long a time when incidents of the most interesting description have been transpiring. He recalls that two Indians were hung for the murder of a deserter named Lee. The very last entry noted: "Kit Carson arrived here (Monterey) on the 22nd of this month with dispatches. He left Washington on the 11th of July."

Kit Carson, famous trapper and scout played a famous part in the California episode of American history. He came first in 1830 with Kwing Young's trapping expedition, returned with John C. Fremont, took part in the Bear Flag revolt, and went to San Diego with Fremont on the Cyane in 1848. His fame as a scout made him an object of admiration to the young fellow from New York. Both Hollingsworth and Lynch speak of him admirably.

Henry S. Burton, who also came to Monterey with the New York Volunteers, and of whom Sergeant Vincent speaks of frequently in his diary, was in command of the expedition to Lower California in 1847. He remained several years in California and was collector of customs in Monterey, 1848-49. Burton's marriage occurred in Monterey in 1851. His wife was Dona Ampara Ruiz of Lower California, whose father and grandfather were prominent in the early annals of the Peninsula. In 1853 Burton purchased the Jamul Rancho, a Mexican grant near San Diego. He died in Rhode Island in 1865.