

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 31, 1951

### **The President And the Cowboys**

On May 1, 1908 there steamed into Monterey Bay, not one, but sixteen battle ships of the Atlantic fleet, iron clads, any one of which could have destroyed the nation's navy in 1846 when Commodore Sloat sailed into Monterey Bay on the Savannah and raised the American Flag over the Custom House. It was the second anchorage in a home port since leaving New York, in their wonderful journey around the world. Arriving from San Diego according to schedule, 6 a.m., even at that early hour, an immense crowd from the surrounding counties gathered along Monterey's shoreline to catch the first glimpse of the "Iron monsters".

The fog was so heavy that the flagship Minnesota, in command of Admiral Thomas, was well past Point Pinos before the fleet was seen from the shore. Anchoring in the bay in four divisions, led by the flagship of each squadron, Mayor Will Jacks immediately stepped on board the Minnesota and tendered the admiral an official welcome to the old capital.

The crowd was immense, wrote the reporters of that day, a crowd such as Monterey had never seen before; the regular and special trains were overflowing, and from all parts of the state they came.

The first squadron, the Connecticut, Kentucky, Vermont, Louisiana, Georgia, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Virginia remained at anchor two days, then sailed for Santa Cruz. The second squadron the Minnesota, Ohio, Missouri, Alabama, Illinois, Kearsarge and Wisconsin, remained until May 4<sup>th</sup> and had an extensive program of field sports, boxing matches and ball games, provided for the officers and marines.

Mayor Will Jacks gave the officers a dinner at Del Monte, Governor Gillett and staff being present. They were also taken over the 17 Mile Drive – a must then as now. A ball was given at Del Monte in honor of the admiral, officers and men.

The entire program was carried out to perfection by the city of Monterey and her people but – the fleet's commander, fighting Bob Evans, was not present to enjoy it. He had left the fleet at Santa Barbara to journey to Paso Robles Hot Springs to recuperate. Evans had been badly crippled by the enemy called

rheumatism, but he had sworn, that "dead or alive he would enter the Golden Gate as commander of the American Navy". A special train brought him from Paso Robles to Monterey from where he stepped from his launch onto the Connecticut, which had returned early on the morning of May 5 to receive him.

The crowds standing on shore saw the commander's flag break out over the Connecticut and the flag of Admiral Thomas lowered from the foretop of the Minnesota.

Theodore Roosevelt visited the Monterey Peninsula in 1905. The President's special train arrived at the Del Monte station where the colonel in command at the Presidio had a troop of cavalry to act as escort, and where a carriage awaited to take the distinguished guest to the Del Monte Hotel. After the officers had been introduced Roosevelt asked that the men be dismissed and then refused to ride in the carriage provided, but started a brisk walk through the grounds to the hotel.

A trip around 17 Mile Drive had been planned, which was converted into a horseback ride at the President's request. He set out with several of the officers from the Presidio and a few citizens and was met at the entrance to the grounds by a hundred cowboys from the valley ranches. The President and his escort went through the streets of Monterey and the citizens out to greet him, had a hard time telling the President from the rough-and-ready escort.