

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Red Pepper...Of the Purest Kind

To continue with the extracts from the "Memoirs of General William T. Sherman" written following his visit to California "In the morning we crossed the Salinas plains, about fifteen miles of level ground, taking a shot occasionally at wild geese, which abounded there, and entering the well wooded valley that comes out from the foot of the Gavillano. We had cruised about all day, and it was almost dark when we reached the house of Senor Gomez. His house was a two-story adobe and had a fence in front. It was situated way up among the foothills of the Gavillano, and could not be seen until within a few yards.

"We hitched our horses to the fence and went in just as Gomez was about to sit down to a tempting supper of stewed hare and tortillas. We were officers and caballeros (horsemen) and could not be ignored. After turning our horses to grass, at his invitation we joined him at supper. The allowance though ample for one, was rather short for three, and I thought the Spanish grandiloquent politeness of Gomez, who was fat and old, was not over-cordial.

"However, we sat down, and I was helped to a dish of rabbit, with what I thought to be an abundance of sauce of tomato. Taking a good mouthful, I felt as though I had taken liquid fire; the tomato was chile colorado or red pepper, of the purest kind. It nearly killed me, and I saw Gomez' eyes twinkle for he saw that his share of the supper was increased.

"After that I contented myself with bits of the meat and an abundant supply of tortillas. Ord was better case hardened and stood it better. We stayed at Gomez' that night, sleeping, as all did on the ground, and the next morning we crossed the hill by bridle-path to the old mission of San Juan Bautista.

"The mission was in a beautiful valley, very level, and bounded on all sides by hills. The plain was covered with wild-grasses and mustard and had abundant water. Cattle and horses were seen in all directions, and it was manifest that the priests who first occupied the country were good judges of land. It was Sunday, and all the people, about a hundred, had come to church from the country round about.

"Ord was somewhat of a Catholic and entered the church with clanking spurs and kneeled down, attracting the attention of all, for he had on the uniform of an American officer.

"As soon as church was out, all rushed to the various sports. I saw the priest, with his gray robes tucked up, playing at billiards, others were cockfighting, and some at horse-racing. My horse had become lame, and I resolved to buy another. As soon as it was known that I wanted a horse, several came to me, displaying their horse by dashing past and hauling them up short. There was a fine black stallion that attracted my attention, and, after trying him myself, I concluded a purchase. I left the seller my lame horse, which he was to bring to me at Monterey, when I was to pay him ten dollars for the other.

"The Mission of San Juan bore the marks of high prosperity at a former period, and had a good pear-orchard just under the plateau where stood the church..."

Now on display in a special case at the Old Custom House is a collection of books from the library of Don Juan Alvarado, first governor of California. The books were recently presented to the Monterey History and Art Association by the Governors grandson, John B. Alvarado, of 1900 Washington Street, San Francisco. The books, seven in all, are printed in Spanish, bearing the dates of publication: 1823, 1831, 1829, 1827, and 1821. Included are three volumes of the story of Rob Boy by Sir Walter Scott, several religious books and the oldest of all, Historia de Reinado de Emperador Carlos Quinto.

In same case is a small portion of the original flagpole upon which the Stars and Stripes was first flown when California became a part of the United States of American.