

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **The Tragedy of Quirk, A Pennsylvania Democrat**

In 1865 Carlisle S. Abbott arrived in the Salinas Valley and leased from David Spence two leagues of land (eight thousand, eight hundred and eighty acres) for a term of five years, at an annual rental of five hundred dollars.

This contract carried with it the privilege of purchasing the west half of the ranch for the sum of fifteen thousand dollars; and here Mr. Abbott for some years engaged in the dairy business milking fifteen hundred cows.

In 1917 Abbott finished a narrative of his life from his boyhood in Canada, where he was born in 1828, to the end of three score years and ten when he was a resident of Monterey County. The book was published as "The Recollections of a California Pioneer," and has been loaned to the writer by Jack Hilbert.

That part of the Salinas Valley west of the city was covered with great tall mustard, in 1865, Abbott relates, while in the easterly direction it was good grazing country. There was also in those years a small stage station consisting of a cabin and barn at the present side of Salinas.

In order to build a residence Mr. Abbott hauled the lumber from Watsonville and built a house and out buildings at the present site of the Spreckels Sugar Company's big factory. In those years there were only two other buildings between his residence and the Oak Grove House below Soledad—one of which was the Deep Well stage station, and the other, a cabin occupied by David Spence on the River Road.

Abbott completed the purchase of the 4,440 acre tract from Spence and later added 12,000 acres of the San Lorenzo Rancho, in the southern end of the Salinas Valley. In 1872 he was made one of California's delegates to the National Republican Convention that nominated President Grant for his second term. In 1876 he was elected a member of the California Assembly and reelected to his second term.

As most of the voting population in the county was made up of native Californians, and it was overwhelmingly Democratic, and Abbott did not speak their language, he hired R. Leese a member of the well-

known family of that name and a resident of Monterey, to travel with him through his district.

In 1876, which was of course a few years after the Civil War, politics were considerably "warmer," wrote Abbott, and when the Electoral Commission decided that Hayes had been elected over Tilden, the storm broke out, and Salinas, not to behind in the procession, staged the following tragedy as described by Abbott.

There was a portly gentleman living in Salinas at the time, whom he called Quirk. He was a Pennsylvania Democrat, and he waxed very angry over the decision of the Electoral Commission, and loudly proclaimed that under no circumstances would Hayes remain seated in the Presidential chair, and that he, Quirk, proposed to prevent it by force of arms. He thereupon undertook to organize a regiment to go back to Washington and remove Hayes and seat Tilden.

Of course, the organization of this armed force required the consumption of a reasonable quantity of stimulant, and Quirk started down Main street and entered one bar room after another, proclaiming his purpose. By the time he reached Abbott House he had been joined by thirty or forty recruits.

In the lobby of Mr. Abbott's hotel near the stove sat Press Woodside, a lawyer and a Southern Democrat, and Quirk expected another recruit. But Woodside replied to his demands as follows: "Quirk, you certainly will not question my fealty to the Democratic party nor believe that I would falter in my support of its time-honored principles. I truly agree with you that Tiden was elected, and that we have been ignominiously robbed of the presidency, yet in my years I feel little disposed to again take up arms against the constituted authorities. I wish you all success but as far as I am concerned to my own satisfaction that whatever political party is successful, the country will last as long as I will, and then it can go to hell."

### **Self-Convinced**

I don't care whether it's a business association, a labor union, a political party or a church—all are guilty of the sin of talking to themselves. Democrats attended Democratic meetings, Republicans turn out for Republican rallies, union members go to their meetings, and the business people attend theirs. They all usually invite, and applaud, speakers they already agree with, and the speakers feel gratified because they evoke

hearty applause. But nobody has had his opinions challenged, nor his beliefs questioned – Vidette

Irresistible

“Oh Lord, grant that we may not despise our rulers; and grant oh Lord, that they may not act so we can't help it”. –Dr. Lyman Beecher