

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **The Constructive Days**

The Reminiscences of Mrs. Thomas W. Morgan from 1847 to 1922 is one of the delightful historic documents I have found in the Monterey Public Library. The story of the life of this pioneer woman of California was compiled by her son, the late Thomas W. Morgan Jr. of Carmel, as his mother told it to him during 1921 and 1922.

The family of Mrs. Morgan had come all the way from Scotland in the early 1840's, had made their home in Canada for a time and it was in this country that Christina Ross Morgan was born. She passed away in Carmel on September 7, 1922. Her daughter, the late M. DeNeale Morgan, was one of the pioneer artists of the Peninsula, and another daughter, Mrs. A.C. Klenke is still a resident of Carmel, occupying her late sister's studio on Lincoln street.

The family of Mrs. Morgan arrived in San Francisco on board the steamer Golden Age, to land in California when excitement was raging concerning the murder of James King of William on May 14, 1856, and the reign of the vigilantes. They missed connection with the steamer Senator which took passengers down the coast to Monterey Bay, their destination. Mrs. Morgan described the alarming sight of miners, running down the San Francisco streets in red shirts, to boots, and belted with pistols.

When the news of the recent murder was made known to the father of the family, he immediately booked passage on Captain Josslyn's little schooner which was about to sail for Monterey. During the journey a storm came up, the young children were terror stricken and when they cried the captain called "Stop that child's crying or I'll throw it overboard," Mrs. Morgan recalls in her memoirs.

Just the mast broke off and plunged into the sea. The crash and the subsequent confusion of the dragging of the rigging in the sea nearly swamped the schooner. By superhuman efforts the sailors cut away the broken mast and rigging, which relieved the terrific strain on the small boat.

In a few hours, Mrs. Morgan remembered the storm showed signs of abating and daylight appeared as they rounded into Monterey Bay and came to anchor just off

the town of Monterey. On the wharves, in boats and on the shore the townspeople had gathered to welcome the newcomers.

Mrs. Morgan and her sister, Jennie, went to school with Miss Florence Rumsey, their first schoolteacher, who had a school next to St. Catherine's convent on Franklin street in Monterey. She remembered well Father Juan who used to walk up and down in front of the convent or school and at vespers time he went inside.

Not only did they see Father Juan, but they talked with him, and remembered what a pleasant manner he had, which could not fail to leave a pleasant impression upon all who knew him, particularly the children.

After a few years, the girls went to school in the old Quartel, a building which had been used as a barracks for the soldiers and which was torn down many years ago. It occupied the land, now city property, where the Standard Oil station is at the north end of Alvarado, on Munras.

Mr. George Strong was one of the teachers at that time. He later moved to Oakland and entered business in San Francisco. Later they had for a teacher Miss Ruth Anna Harker, daughter of the Rev. Mr. Harker and wife, who were early comers to Monterey. Miss Harker became Mrs. Bella Wellman, wife of the founder of the well known firm of Wellman, Peck and Company of San Francisco. Ms. G.F. Beardsley of Carmel is their daughter. The old Quartel was formerly part of the Presidio of Monterey. When Mrs. Morgan and her sister went to school there were about 400 children attending. She notes that in her opinion it took a great deal of courage for a young woman to come to this part of the country to teach during those years of reconstruction. There were pupils of many types and conditions gathered together in the Quartel.

Now and then there were exciting incidents during those early days. Quick justice or revenge on the part of some, for the time upset tranquillity, in the form of shootings or hangings. The element of lawlessness as well as the more peaceful pursuits were a part of the constructive days.