

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Matter of Jonathan Cogitation

Monterey, June 23, 1855 –

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–“During one of the high tides of last week the Monterey Sardine, which is nearly the exact figure, size and weight of the Mediterranean species, was thrown up in the thousands on our beach, for the length of a mile or so.”

This interesting item appeared in the Monterey Sentinel on the above date. The Sentinel started publication in Monterey on June 2, 1855 and was published continuously until July of 1856. Through the kindness of Leon Rowland of the Santa Cruz Sentinel-News, I was privileged to see the bound copies of this first year of publication and take from Volume 1, Number 1, several choice bits of historical facts.

On June 14, 1856, the Sentinel moved across the bay to Santa Cruz when Albion P. Jordon of that city, offered free transportation for the plant on one of his lumber schooners and John McElroy, the publisher, accepted the proposition, and the press was set up in that city.

John McElroy, veteran of the Mexican war had, with John A. Lewis, in 1851 founded the Los Angeles Star, which was also the Estrella, with some of its columns printed in Spanish.

McElroy, a native of Ohio, who had served three months in the Louisiana volunteer regiment in the Mexican war, drifted north, after the custom of printers in those days, with Col. Richard Rush published the Marysville Express, worked briefly on a paper in the San Joaquin Valley and in the Spring of 1855 interested Delos P. Ashley, a Monterey lawyer, who had come from Michigan in 1849, in starting a weekly paper.

Type was secured from the Illustrated Sacramento Union.

Where the press came from McElroy, 30 years later, said he did not know – Dr. Andrew Randall procured it. All these facts were told by Mr. Rowland in his brief history of the Santa Cruz Sentinel.

In the library of the old Mexican quartel, California and Webster streets, the first issue of the Monterey Sentinel was printed on June 2, 1855. It was 20 columns in all,

with a page 24 by 30 inches, subscription price \$6 a year. California street is now Munras avenue.

In April 1866, Benjamin Park Kooser bought the half interest which had once been Ashleys. Kooser was a Pennsylvania printer who had worked along the Mississippi river towns until he enlisted in the artillery in the Mexican war. His regiment arrived in Monterey in January, 1847, and Corporal Kooser set type for Walter Colton's Californian, the State's first paper.

An item headed "Monterey Library" caught my eye in the first issue. It read: "The Monterey Library was organized in this place in the year 1849 and it is believed to be the first established library in California. This association is placed upon a permanent basis and is a nucleus round which the friends of literary and social refinement and elevation, may cordially unite.

"The greater part of the library was purchased in New York and contains about 1,000 volumes of American, English and Spanish books, treating upon various subjects of human knowledge."

On June 23, 1855, there appeared this item: "Messrs. Emory and Bassett have 35 men now engaged in getting out granite at Stillwater Bay near Carmelo. We understand that there is good hope of this quarry getting a portion of the contract for building the dry dock and edifices of the navy yard at Mare Island for which it is admirably suited."

On July 14, 1855, we noted this piece of news: "Our county jail, built of Monterey granite, is now nearly completed, and its total cost is a little over \$14,000. The building has a good appearance, and is perhaps quite secure but there are many of the stones which are too small, and ought never to have been placed there. It is believed there are some defects in construction. There is to be a good granite wall around the yard, and on the whole the county never undertook anything which ended as well as this."