

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **A Horse And A Rose**

The untiring exertions of Mr. Colton for the advancement and prosperity of Monterey have never been made public at home, neither appreciated in California, as would have been the case but for the discovery of gold mines, which absorbed the thoughts and interests of every man in the country. Yet the erection of the substantial edifice for the public schools and Town Hall, will be an enduring monument to his worth and memory. The building was constructed entirely by the individual exertions of Mr. Colton.

The foregoing paragraph was copied from "The Sea and the Sailor" and "other literary remains" of Rev. Walter Colton, as published by D.W. Evans and Co., in New York, in 1860. A first edition of this work was presented to the First Theater museum a good many years ago by H.M. Stevens of St. Albans, Vermont, a descendant of the Rev. Mr. Colton and since that time has been carefully cared for by the custodian, Mrs. Isabel Hartigan.

As we read this one-hundred year old account of Colton's trip by sea from the East Coast to Monterey, during which he was the chaplain on the frigate Congress, we picked out bits which applied to Monterey as life existed here in 1846.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, 1847, he wrote from Monterey to his wife and son:

"I will now give you some idea of a planter's establishment in California. A difference of opinion having arisen between two planters, whose land adjoined, about the boundary line, I was called upon, as chief magistrate of the jurisdiction, to go and settle the affair. I said I would be ready on the following Monday. On that day about noon, a gentleman called with his servant, who was also mounted and leading two horses. One was white, a splendid animal, with broad chest, slender legs, round shoulders, long flowing tail and mane, and an eye full of fire, and champing at the bit. The gentleman told me he was for me, I forthwith mounted him and my secretary took the other.

"Four miles took us over the mountain ridge which encircles Monterey. Descending this, we came to a beautiful plain of 15 miles more, with a broad stream running through the middle. We galloped over it, and

entered a wild, romantic ravine extending 15 miles more, and then emerged upon another rich plain, which, with the one we had just passed, was covered with immense herds of cattle.

"Here we found another mountain stream, and breaking through the forest which overhung it, discovered, on the brow of an elevation which swelled up from the bosom of the vast and verdant plain, a large mansion, whose white portico glittered in the sun."

As twilight deepened, the old mansion was lighted up – every room with a light in it, and the Indians kindled a bonfire outside, according to Colton's recording.

The mansion had a main building and two wings, with an intervening portico; the great parlor was in the center. Here two ladies amused their guests with their guitars. The evening passed away with music and chat; at 10 o'clock came supper "a meal fit for a king, but this is always the main meal in California." Colton also wrote that his bedroom was in the wing of the building and that he found it filled with roses, and "what is surprising, not a flea in the bed."

In the morning the white horse was mounted again and they rode over the plantation, surveying the disputed line comparing it with maps and titles, and taking testimony. They were six hours on horseback and as many more the following day. He wrote Mrs. Colton that the farm of the don lies 15 miles square in the richest land in California, that he had only 8,000 head of cattle, 1,000 horses, and 4,000 sheep.

The two ladies of whom Colton spoke were the daughters of the don; their mother the donna, though aged, was still lively. He wrote: "They made me tell them all about you and Walter. The single lady said I must bring you out here, and she would give you the horse I rode. The married one said she would give you 40 cows, the donna said she would give you 100 sheep; the old don said he would give you 1,000 acres of land for Walter!"

The fourth day Colton and his party returned to Monterey and he sent the horse back, with a rose to its owner.