

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Monterey Had the First P.O.**

One hundred and four years ago today, Nov. 21, 1848, Monterey's first United States Postmaster was appointed. But it was not until February 23 of the following year that Capt. William Marcy arrived to take charge, disembarking at Monterey from the schooner Californian.

A postmaster had been appointed for San Francisco but that official did not arrive until five days after Capt. Marcy had arrived here; so Monterey can claim the distinction of having the first federal post office in the State of California

The story of the establishment of the post office in Monterey goes back to 1849 when William Voorhees, the U.S. Postal Mail agent, assigned to set up the post offices in California, came ashore from the Californian when it docked here.

Seeing the critical mail condition in Monterey caused by the influx of new settlers and the gold rush, he immediately appointed a postmaster. Previous to this time the mail had been delivered in a haphazard manner by the military government.

Early records show that business was not too good nor was the delivery by schooner too frequent. During the first year of operation net proceeds for the period were \$139.63, according to a story which appeared in The Herald in 1948 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the post office's establishment here.

The total salary of Postmaster Marcy for the first year was only \$93.08. This sum was based on the percentage of the gross business. Records also show that Voorhees had a difficult time keeping the postmasters in office in those early days because of the low pay.

In a report to Washington, Voorhees told of postmasters quitting in droves to seek for gold. He was unable even to hire postmasters for San Diego and Santa Barbara and complained that the salaries allotted would not sustain the gold rush cost of living.

Items which he included in cost of living report to Washington were: Boarding house, \$17.50 per week; office rent \$100 per month; wood \$30 a cord. Washington however turned a deaf ear to his plea for an increased salary, and Voorhees resigned.

Mrs. Eleanor Frasier, a long time resident of Monterey, in hopes of learning more about Monterey's post office and postmasters, wrote to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and received the following information concerning these historic items:

"The records of the U.S. Post Office Department, now in the archives, dates from 1789 to 1930. Monterey's post office is dated November 21, 1848." They listed for her the following postmasters and their appointment dates:

"Marcy, Nov. 21, 1848

"A. Randell, April 9, 1851

"William Curtis, Feb. 28, 1855

"Simpson Conover, June 8, 1861

"Allen Carter, March 16, 1863

"John D. Callaghan, June 7, 1866

"Felipe Gomez, Dec. 12, 1870

"Edward Ingram, Jan. 29, 1887

"Jacob R. Leese, May 28, 1889

"Fannoe Ingram, Jan. 12, 1894

"W.W. James, June 30, 1897

"Charles Noggle, Aug. 11, 1914

Robert F. Johnson (acting) Aug. 1. 1918

"John L. Steward, Oct. 24, 1918."

Since the latter date the late John F. Dougherty and Boyd Beall, the present incumbent, have served Monterey as postmasters.

Monterey's post office has had many different locations over the years. The first post office, the site of which bears an historical marker, was on Alvarado street but was torn down to make way for a modern building. The old two-story adobe building had been built by Dr. J.D. Callaghan on property which in 1849 had belonged to Thomas Oliver Larkin. Dr. Callaghan was a former postmaster and had the office in his drug store and doctor's office.