

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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It Was News to The Cypress

The scene along the line of railroad construction between Monterey and the Grove is one of life and activity. Mongolians as busy as bees, with their large bamboo hats, dump carts and the inevitable mule running to and fro, foretell that the road will be at Pacific Grove before the month is out."

The above quotation is from the May 18, 1889 copy of the Monterey Cypress, Vol. I, No. 19. The story is headlined "The Railroad" and its subhead of "Two Miles of Historic Scenery."

Before this May day of 1889, there was a stream running down the hill and emptying into the bay near the Presidio gate at the end of Pacific street. The news story in the Cypress tells the subscribers that the mouth of the beach at the Old Cross has been filled in and a culvert erected to carry the water into the bay. The "Old Cross" was a large white wooden cross erected at the Portola-Serra landing place, which in later years was replaced by the present markers. "The track at this writing has been laid to a point near the whaling station and by Saturday the locomotive should be whistling at New Monterey," the Cypress further predicts.

The Cypress reporter was also interested in the history of Monterey and appreciated its value to the traveler. He wrote: "No spot in California is more historical than the ground over which the Pacific Grove extension is now being built. No sooner will the passenger leave the Monterey depot in the direction of the Grove, than he will be almost able to touch with his hand from the car window the Old Custom House where Commodore Sloat hoisted the American Flag." Just beyond the cross of Father Serra, toward the bay our early day informant tells the reader, there is a rock upon which the first wharf of Monterey was built in 1847.

"While passing these points the passenger if he looks sharp and turns his head rapidly from one side to the other, can see the old historic fort on the hill; an old cannon still defying the enemy to venture within its range. These and many other features, added to the beautiful scenery, foaming surf, etc., makes this the most interesting piece of railroad in the United States." Thus the story is finished for that day.

A pioneer of '43 informed the Cypress editor in 1889, that between the Custom House and the First Brick House, a lady's wedding bonnet was sold at auction in 1848 and purchased by a young man who in the fall of the same year married a lady at Stockton, who also wore the bonnet.

From the first wharf at Monterey it is said, the Cypress editor relates, General Sherman, then Lieutenant Sherman, spilt 160 gallons aguardiente (Mexican alcoholic liquor) overboard. The general called it salt water punch.

The pioneer of '43 also informed the Cypress that among the guests at the Del Monte the previous Sunday were Josiah Belden and his son and daughter. "No one can appreciate the change that has taken place in these parts better than Mr. Belden Sr., who in 1841 kept a store in Monterey in an adobe building called the "Cuatro Vientos" (four winds)," wrote the reporter.

"Cuatro Vientos" is now the Monterey Woman's civic Club's property on Calle Principal.