

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Pioneer At Five

There is probably no one on the peninsula more interested in its early history than Victor Mossop. He carries in his mind a fund of information and has great admiration for the ole-timers and their activities. Because of this interest and because of his unselfish sharing with others, the Monterey History and Art Association in appreciation recently made him a special member of their group.

In a recent conversation with Mr. Mossop, we had him tell us about his mother, Mrs. Nancy Ann Mossop, who passed away in Monterey in April of 1939. She had lived in Monterey for more than fifty years, one of the few remaining California pioneers. She had reached her ninety-third year when she died at her home on Van Buren street.

Mrs. Mossop was born in Waco, Texas, in 1846. In the fall of 1851, she accompanied her father, Dr. Robert Mathews and other members of the family on the long trip to California. The party traveled first by covered wagon down into Old Mexico from where they finished their journey by pack train over the mountains to Mazatlán, Mexico, thence by sailboat up the west coast.

Mr. Mossop relates that his mother remembered the trip very well, despite the fact that she was so young. She recalled to her children in later years many of her experiences during the long journey. She told that in one place in the mountains a loaded mule fell from the trail, landed in a tree lower down and was evidently killed for the pack was salvaged from the tree.

The boat on which the family traveled up the coast had 400 persons on board but had been built to carry only about half that number, all of which added to the danger and discomfort of the passengers.

After a week at sea, a storm carried away the sails and for 71 days thereafter the little craft drifted helplessly while those on board suffered from hunger and thirst. Finally they drifted into San Luis Obispo harbor at Morro Rock. Mr. Mossop remembers his mother telling her children that early one morning they were awakened by the cry of "Land," and on looking up they could see the green hills in the north. A raft was hurriedly built on board ship and the passengers were landed where the

town of Morro Bay stands today. This was about the middle of February, 1852.

From Morro Bay, Dr. Matthews and his family were hauled by a kind-hearted Spanish ranchero in oxcarts up to the San Luis Obispo Mission where they were cared for by the mission fathers. After recuperating for some time at the mission, they started for San Juan Bautista by oxcarts furnished them by the mission and rancheros.

Mrs. Mossop always remembered, so her son declares, the night the family camped at the old Mission San Antonio in Jolon and the beautiful oak trees that grew in the valley. Their next stop was at Soledad Mission where they were met by Grandpa Mathews' brother, John Mathews, who had arrived in California the previous year to look for gold. He took the doctor and his family on to San Juan in his wagon, landing there about the middle of April 1852. Here they remained and Mrs. Mossop went to school in the first house that was built in San Juan.

In 1852 Monterey and San Benito County were one. Dr. Mathews soon after his arrival was elected deputy coroner and public administrator, the business of which brought him to Monterey from San Juan very often, as Monterey was the county seat. While here he generally was a guest in the home of Sheriff James Roach, now known as the Gordon House on Pierce street, next to Colton Hall. At times he visited with his old friend, Dr. James Stokes at his Vergeles Rancho, close to Natividad on the old San Juan Stage road.

Nancy Ann Mathews met and married Lorenzo Augustus Mossop in San Juan. She was the youngest of three girls born to Dr. and Mrs. Mathews—Elizabeth and Vermella were the other two.