

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Delegate From Los Angeles

"El Quacheno, How I want to help make the Constitution of California – Stirring Historical Incidents" by Stephen Clark Foster, delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1849, was published a few years ago by the Dawson Book Shop in Los Angeles. The original account of Foster's trip to Monterey from Los Angeles in 1849, was printed in The Los Angeles Evening Express of March 8 and 9, 1878.

In Dawson's 'El Quacheno,' the publisher states that they have reproduced the subtitle as it appeared originally: "How I want to help make the Constitution of California – Stirring Historical Incidents." It seems probably that "want" is a typographical error for "went," a word more in accord with the theme of Foster's story.

Stephen Clark Foster was 28 years old when he was elected a delegate to the California Constitutional Convention. He had graduated from Yale, taught school in Virginia and Alabama, and attended Louisiana Medical School in New Orleans, practiced medicine in Missouri, traded in New Mexico and Sonora, served as interpreter for the Mormon Battalion and as Alcalde of Los Angeles, In the 50's he served as State Senator and was also first superintendent of schools in Los Angeles.

After Foster was elected a delegate to the Monterey convention, he began to worry about who was to pay the expenses of such a trip and he wrote: "I was at first dubious about going, hardly considering the honor to be acquired by helping the administration out of its difficulties would be fair consideration for the money to be paid out of my own pocket."

After a consultation with his father-in-law, Don Antonio Maria Lugo, he decided to make the trip at any cost. Lugo told Foster to stop with his sister, Dona Maria Antonia, the widow of old "Sargeant Vallejo." When Foster asked for a letter to her, Lugo replied: "A letter. I can't write and she can't read, for we had no schools in California when we were young. I tell you what I will do I will make Jose loan you 'El Quacheno.'" My sister knows the horse, for I rode him to Monterey three years ago, and she know my son would lend the horse to no man in California except his old father."

Foster borrowed \$100, rode the horse, and became an independent delegate from the District of Los Angeles to the Constitutional Convention in Monterey.

In the trek to Monterey Foster was accompanied by Stearns, Dominguez and Carrillo. They started on August 20, 1849, and traveled at the rate of 60 or 70 miles a day. Each night they lodged in a private home – free gratis. The last day's ride was from Soledad Mission to Monterey, down the west bank of the Salinas River. Foster relates that they arrived at Monterey near sunset, after a warm, dusty day's ride. Stearns stopped with Don David Spence, Carrillo and Dominguez rode on to the house of Dona Angustias de Ximena a niece of the former – Carrillo pointed out the house of Senora Vallejo, to which Foster went and received a hearty welcome.

The Monterey History and Art Association has just received a number of valuable and interesting gifts. Mrs. Frank Jakobs has presented a handsome example of the old Spanish leather trunks used in California in the early days. It had belonged to her great grandmother, Maria de los Angeles Cota, so would date back more than 100 years. Maria Cota married Joaquin de la Torre, a Spaniard who was the grantee by Mexico of the 16,523 acres composing the Arroyo Seco Rancho, in 1840. Their daughter Maria Rita de la Torre, married Florencio Serrano and their daughter, Maria Manuela Serrano married Francisco Rico and they became the parents of Inez Benecia Rico Jakobs, the donor of the trunk which has been handed down through four generations. The trunk is now on display at the old Custom House.

Mrs. Jakobs also gave a little wooden doll's chair which has been placed in the children's room at the Stevenson House The chair had been a gift to Mrs. Jakobs' sister, Manuelita (little Manuela) Rico, who was born in 1880 at Santa Rita. She died as a very young child and Mrs. Jakobs inherited the chair.

Another gift shown at the meeting of the directors of the History and Art Association last Monday afternoon was a coal oil lamp of marble and bronze, given by Mrs. Margaret Janet McDougal Fenton of Salinas. Mrs. Fenton was born in the Custom House in 1867 when her father D.K. McDougal, was administrator there. The lamp had been brought from Spain by Father Daniel and presented to Mr. McDougal who made use of it at the Custom House during his residence there in the 1860's.

The gift was made through Mrs. Fenton's daughter,
Mrs. George von Soosten of Salinas.

Mrs. W.R. Holman, a member of the board of directors
of the association, presented the first volume of the
Larkin Papers to the reference library at the Custom
House, established by the association.