

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Ords of Royal Descent

It seems most appropriate today to write a bit of the history of Fort Ord and the General Ord for whom this vast military reservation was named. On May 17 there will be an observance of Armed Forces Day at the Fort, when a monument and plaque will be placed to mark the establishment as a permanent Army post.

It is a matter of war department record that the present and official name of the 23,000 acre reservation was chosen to honor Major General Edward Otho Cresap Ord who first saw service against the Seminole Indians in Florida, fought in the campaign to win California and was an outstanding commander in the Civil War.

Military history of General Ord's family dates back to the Revolutionary War and his grandfather was in command of the detachment which quelled the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. General Ord himself was a graduate of West Point in 1839 and two years later was promoted to first lieutenant for gallantry against the Seminoles.

Commanding a battery of artillery, he came with Lieutenant Halleck and Lieutenant Sherman in the ship Lexington from New York to California and supported Sherman in his bloodless attack which led to the capture of Monterey. Later in 1854 and 1855 he served on the California Coast Survey and did extensive mapping in this region. He also participated in battles with the Rogue River and Spokane Indians.

In September 1861, young Ord was jumped from captain to brigadier general of the Volunteers and was ordered to the East coast to take part in the war between the states.

After holding many important commands and being decorated for bravery, he retired in 1880, after which Congress made him a major general in recognition of his long and brilliant service. He died in Havana, Cuba, in 1883 of yellow fever contracted during an extensive business trip to Mexico.

General Ord first came to Monterey in 1847, with his brother, Dr. James Ord, an Army surgeon with Company F of the Third United States Artillery, under contract and not a member of the regular Army.

Mrs. Mary Ord, wife of the general, lived in San Diego, California, until her death several years ago. In 1945 an old scrapbook containing many of the highlights in the life of General Ord and members of his family, was presented to Post Headquarters at the fort. Outstanding among the many items of interest was the news of the wedding of Roberta Augusta, the daughter of the General and Mrs. Ord, to General Geronimo Trevino, commanding general of the Mexican forces in northern Mexico.

Another daughter, Lucy Maude Ord, married John S. Mason, the son of General John S. Mason, also identified with the early Army life in Monterey.

Another interesting story concerning the Ord family has been told before in this column, but we will repeat it again, because of present interest. A morganatic marriage in 1785 of the Prince of Wales, the future King George IV, with Lady Fitz-Herbert, reigning beauty of London, resulted in the birth of a son who, ineligible to inherit the throne, was sent to the United States in 1800. His companion on the trip across the ocean to the new country was a priest who, knowing that his charge must have a name, after much thought finally choose the name of James ORD, the latter being a combination of the first letters of "Of Royal Descent." He attended Georgetown University, fought in the War of 1812 and married Rebecca Cresap of Baltimore. They became the parents of General Ord and Dr. James Ord. James Ord St. died in 1873 at Omaha, where his son was stationed at an Army post.