

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 21, 1952

Steamship Pioneer

"First Steamship Pioneers," a volume published in San Francisco by H.S. Crocker Company in 1874, and presented to the Monterey Library by the late Miss Vida Jacks, contains many items of interest relating to the early history of Monterey and those intimations connected with the formation of the first constitution for the State of California.

In this fascinating volume we found that during the early days of 1848 there were many ships leaving the harbor of New Orleans for the west coast, among which was the "Falcon" which left at a later day – Dec. 18, 1848. Among the passengers on this now historic ship was one, Honorable John McDougall, familiarly known as Capt. McDougall. He had commanded a company and done efficient service in the war with Mexico and her people, and being a student of the Spanish language, together with an easy way of communication with strangers, not only gave him ready access to all on board, but made him an exceedingly useful and agreeable traveling companion.

In "First Steamship Pioneers" edited by a committee from the original association and in which articles were written by the members of the pioneers for the 1874 edition, the article on John McDougall contained this paragraph. "His amiable wife, by whose winning ways, vouchsafed alone for her sex, constantly held in check what might otherwise have been an undesirable degree of boldness and push, softened what might have been undue asperities of nature, and really toned the creature down and toned the moral virtue up, in the husband, to such a degree, that, as a couple, they were held in very high esteem."

Arriving in California and taking a very prominent part almost immediately in politics, Captain McDougall was chosen as one of the representatives of Sacramento to the Constitutional Convention held in Monterey in 1849. In that body he held a conspicuous position, served on several of the most important committees, and was a prominent member, even among the many men of mark who surrounded him.

At the close of the legitimate business of the convention, the members resolved themselves into a sort of a caucus, to fix upon candidates to fill the several

positions created by the constitution they had just formed. Men had been agreed upon for several of the offices, when "Who shall be the Lieutenant Governor?" was asked. Perfectly characteristic of the man, McDougall looked up, and, with a half yawn, said, in his peculiar, self-complacent and assured manner:

"I reckon I'll take that – I don't believe anybody else will want it."

The whole thing was so ludicrously droll, that every man was thrown off his guard, and, in a paroxysm of jocose hilarity, McDougall was permitted to "take that."

He was triumphantly elected, and served as president of the first Senate, with great dignity and propriety.

At the close of Governor Peter Burnette's first term as governor of California, he resigned, for the double reason, that he had a real taste for a domestic, quiet life, and no taste at all for the vexations and unrest of a political career. This act placed McDougall in the executive chair, as the second governor of California, where he did as much for the welfare of the state, and for the interests of his constituents, as could be reasonably expected of any man at the time and under the circumstances of his administration.