

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 14, 1952

Flowers For The Fire Department

The report of the grand celebration of the 40th anniversary of the greatest event in the history of Monterey, according to the news comments of Monday, July 5, 1886, has been recorded in a small book published soon after that historic event and recently presented to the Custom House Museum by Mrs. Lucia Stambaugh of San Mateo. The story as published in the Monterey Argus and written by Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez, gives a complete and entertaining account of the event – the anniversary of the taking of California for the United States.

Mrs. Sanchez stated that the celebration was not only grand in numbers but grand in purpose – the celebration of the anniversary of the hosting of the American flag here by Commodore Sloat on July 7, 1846. She wrote: "No boastful exultation marred the occasion, but a calm, proud feeling of entire satisfaction shone from each face, made the eye bright and the step light. It was essentially California's Day – a grand outpouring of her noblest and best. To the aged veteran who gave us the prize, and the old pioneer who has given the best of his life to polishing it, the scene must have been one of proud, infinite pleasure, and he must have felt the fullness of the words, 'It is well'".

There being always two sides to each story, and Monterey still retaining at that time, as citizens many of those who in sorrow saw the banner of their beloved countrymen lowered, though not in disgrace, but as the fortune of war, on the day which we now recall with much rejoicing, there may have been some of the bitterness of regret beneath the magnanimity with which they laid aside all old scores and joined in the general joy, so the spectator reported. If such was the case it was buried on that day deep in the hearts of those who then granted a deep allegiance to the United States, and the ancestral homes of the old Spanish homes of Monterey were that day decked as gaily as for a "fiesta" as those of the "Americanos" themselves.

All along the line of march that day the city presented a finer appearance than ever before in her history. Along the streets the property owners went to work with rigor which astonished themselves, wrote Mrs. Sanchez. They spared no expense in the way of paint and whitewash to hide the ravages of years. Young pine trees were cut

in great numbers in the surrounding hills and placed along the curbs of Alvarado street, thus giving it the pleasant resemblance of a green lane.

The white walls and balconies of the old adobe houses were profusely trimmed and festooned with evergreens, flags and bunting, and flowers were employed to such an extent in the decorations that the old Spanish gardens looked as if a cyclone had swept through them. Arches were erected at various points, a number of handsome flags, including a "bear" banner (painted by artist Stanton of San Francisco), were purchased and run up on tall staffs at the street corners. The whole effect was "brilliant enough to make the oldest citizen believe himself the victim of a midsummer night's dream."

Among the survivors of the framers of the California Constitution attending the celebration in 1886 were: Hon. Elam Brown, Hon. Joseph Aram and Hon. Elisha Crosby.

The young ladies who occupied the triumphal car in the characters of the States of the Union were: Representing the goddess of liberty, Miss Minnie Wornes; the States – Maude Stone, Maggie Jacks, Lille Wornes, Mary Maddel, Aggie Holmes, Lulu Pyburn, Birdie Pyburn, Ida Joseph, Rosa Abrego, Henrietta Burnett, Lilah Hawthorn, Amelia Gomez, Mariana Gomez, Millie Whitcomb, Dollie Wright, Carrie Morey, Edith Anthony, Mary Walter, Lillie Cramer, Reinalda Torres, Maude Brown, Lucy, Prescott, Florence Prescott, Annie and May Bostrum, Rosie Escolle, Lottie Bolco, Blanche Stewart, Mary Sanchez, Edith Little and others.

"With the exception of the artillery, which mounted the hills at the old fort, the column halted in front of the Custom House at the conclusion of the parade. The building was wrapped in bunting and in front of the balcony were designs worked in flowers, flags and war emblems. A little removed from the crowd were the band and fire companies. The apparatus of the latter was profusely decorated with flowers, while each member carried a large bouquet. We wonder if we could accomplish this decorative scheme with the fire department today?"