

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 13, 1953

Early Foreigners Here

Once again, "Who was the first American to settle in California?" Dr. Rockwell Hunt, retired dean of the history department of the Collect of the Pacific at Stockton, after a great deal of research, writes that Thomas W. Doak, born in 1816, was the first American settler in California. He was a native of Boston, who came to the West Coast of California on the Albatross. His name was often written "Duke" and "Doc", according to Bancroft's History of California.

Doak was baptized at San Carlos Mission in Monterey in 1816 as Felipe Santiago. In 1818 he was employed to paint the church at San Juan Bautista, where he was married in 1820 to Maria Lugarda, daughter of Mariano Castro. He lived for some years in Santa Cruz, where at least two of his children were born.

Monsignor James Culleton of the Fresno-Monterey Diocese of the Catholic Church, in his "Indians and Pioneers of Old Monterey," writes: "In 1816 Thomas Doak was left behind by the Lydia. Other sailors whose names first appear as California residents in this year are George Mayo and Marcus Masson. All these men were from Boston or its vicinity, and all entered the Catholic church while in Monterey. The only one whose ancestry is clearly given is Masson whose father is said to be Irish. Doak's parents may have been Huguenots. These were Monterey's first Americans. Juan Maria Romero, an Irish resident, appears in 1816 as interpreter for some English-speaking visitors."

Monterey's first Chinese resident came as a cook with Governor de Solo – so says Father Culleton. He was Ak Nam, a native of Chinsan, some six leagues from Macao in Canton Province. He became a Christian Oct. 27, 1815, and died two years later.

The first foreign residents of California were Antonio Alegre, a Genoese, Antonio Rocha, a Portuguese; Julian Malcolm or Malcolmson, and James Baldwin. John Mulligan, or Milligan, the Irish weaver, may have arrived on the same occasion. Gilroy, Malcolm and Baldwin were left behind suffering from scurvy when the Isaac Todd sailed out of Monterey Bay. Eight others deserted her at the same time, according to recorded history.

Among other first foreign residents of Monterey were two Indians from the Russian establishments in the far

north. Coming south in 1809 were Columba and Andres, but just how they gained transportation is not known. Columba lived at the mission in the house of "mayordomo" (steward). The padres seem not to have bothered about them till they were in danger of death two years later, according to the research of Father Culleton. Both died in 1811 and both were Christians of the Orthodox persuasion when they came to California.