

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **A Light That Guided Ships**

Seven years after arriving in Monterey from New York, Milton Little decided to erect a number of residences and as a consequence he imported a quantity of lumber from Australia and zinc from New York, the latter being cut and grooved to his measurements. Both shipments arrived by sailing ships. He had ordered enough of the zinc to cover the outside walls of six houses, but in the end had just enough for four buildings. Today the only house still standing in Monterey built from the zinc by Mr. Little, is enclosed in the walls of the Kimball Hotel on lower Alvarado Street.

Two houses built about the same time by Mr. Little were situated in New Monterey, one of which was located where the Lighthouse Furniture Store now stands.

The late Mrs. Mary Elmore, the daughter of Milton Little, recalled in an interview before her death a number of years ago, a worthwhile service performed by her mother from this zinc house in the early days.

"Families were larger then. Just think, there were 13 of us. One thing that I remember well was the coal-oil lamp that mother burned in her room all night. This she did so if any of the children woke, he could easily find his way to light and comfort," she said.

"By that time we were living near the harbor, and the fishermen would use our light as a guide to run into port. Of course, way out, there was a little lighthouse which the sailors sighted as they entered the bay. Then they would look for the light of Chinatown, but if there was a fog, as they neared shore, they would need directing from our light.

"The first mother knew about this service she was performing was when the captain inquired for Mrs. Little. When mother told him she was the person he was looking for, he said, "God bless you, Mrs. Little. You saved our lives last night, for if it had not been for your light we would have been unable to make port."

"Then it frequently happened that our night-light guided the sailors. After that, even when we were all grown, my mother kept the lamp burning and when it stormed she placed it in the window with a looking glass in the back of it, the window shade drawn in back of that, so it would shine way out to sea, Mother felt the

responsibility of these boats, so when a freighter did not arrive when she was expected, she would have a gun fired. If the vessel was safely making the harbor, they would signal with a return shot. Now it is not much like it was when I was a girl."

Another story which should go down in history as told Mrs. Elmore concerned early day social gatherings in Monterey. Part of the story follows in her own words:

"When I was a little girl huge forests surrounded Monterey and made the climate warmer than it is now, so we often had picnics. One of the matrons would send word in the morning by one of her peons and she would definitely state what each guest was to bring.

"There were no telephones of course and as distances were great, no one could change the plans once they were made. In the afternoon the women and children would ride in ox-carts to the appointed beach or woods. With the aid of the peons, supper would be quite ready when the men arrived. We had such good times. Often we had mussel or clam bakes and then played games. Four or five families would be at one of these picnics and big and little children and all the grown-ups would enter the games afterward.

(To Be Continued)