

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **And a Bed Floated In ...**

The Milton Littles, whose home was the upper floor of the building now known as the Kimball Hotel, with Little's mercantile store on the ground floor, always referred to their New Monterey land and home as the farm. They moved to that farm in 1865 and it was there that Mrs. Little began her lighthouse service, by placing a lamp in the window to guide the ships into Monterey harbor.

When Milton Little married Mary Eager about 1847, one of the gifts the bride received from her husband was an enormous spool bed. It had come from the east coast by way of the Horn to Monterey and being too large and too heavy to be transferred from the sailing ship to the small boats available, it was thrown overboard, so the story goes, and floated onto the beach at Monterey.

That bed is now one of the most admired objects in one of the upper rooms in the Stevenson House on Houston Street. Upon her death it was given to her daughter, the late Mrs. Kate Little Wolter, the mother of Mrs. Frank Massie and the late Mrs. Mary Murray of Monterey.

Mrs. Mary Elmore, who lived in Monterey until her death a number of years ago, was also a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Little. In an interview which she gave to a reporter from a nationally circulated paper, Mrs. Elmore told of Monterey in the days when her parents were still alive and prominently associated with the early life here.

"In the ranches surrounding Monterey, there was immense wealth. To give you an idea, I remember a Spaniard who gave, besides land and other gifts, 1,800 head of heifers as a wedding present to his daughter.

"Although the Spanish costume was never worn in my time, the women were always handsomely gowned and usually wore silk. When they paid calls or did their errands, they rode in ox-carts. You can't imagine how clumsy they were with no springs, and wheels of solid wood which rumbled ponderously over the rough roads. Cushions helped somewhat to make the seats more comfortable and a hide was spread on the floor to protect dainty slippers.

"A Mexican peon always walked at the head of the oxen and at the command of the mistress would halt frequently to grease squeaky axles with some soap. A

lady never rode horseback, although the men were constantly on their horses. All the old Spanish customs were practiced. We often danced, but not like the young people do today. No, there were no clubs or community dancing then, but balls were held in the home "sala" and we danced Spanish dances.

"These parties were informally formal and began any time between 3 and 7 o'clock, and were usually over about 11 o'clock. We never remained after 12 o'clock. All the guests were supposed to be socially equal so there were no introductions. An invitation constituted an introduction to all the guests."

Mrs. Elmore's description of their Christmas festivities and of the making of cascarones is fascinating and so we repeat it here: "For some weeks after Christmas, there was a festive period and we attended many parties and balls. There was a funny custom of using cascarones. Weeks before an important occasion, egg shells were filled with gold confetti and then sealed. We used these for playing games and also as an invitation to dance. Breaking the shells, a young gallant would let the confetti float over the head of the girl he desired as a partner. Even if he had not been formally introduced this was quite correct, and if she wished to continue she spoke first the next time they met. Mother would prepare as many as five dozen of these cascarones for our family to use at a single party."