

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 1, 1953

### **More About Jim Gleason**

Honolulu was kept informed on the happenings in Monterey and California through the correspondence of James H. Gleason with his uncle, John Paty, a merchant in Oahu, Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands).

In the letter which the writer sent by Euphemia, a sailing vessel out of Monterey, he told of news of California first newspaper.

"I have enclosed you two last, and first "Californians" which will give you a better idea of affairs than I can write, I also enclosed you Comdr. Stockton's Proclamation. You see we can now boast of a newspaper in California. The first issue was published on the 15th Inst.

It is a modest little sheet as you will see and the paper is of very inferior quality. It was intended for the manufacture of cigaritos. The first issue had the honor to contain the news of the declaration of war with Mexico. It produced quite an excitement here and copies could not be turned out fast enough to satisfy the demand. Crowds stood waiting, ready to snatch them from the press. The subscription price as you will see is moderate sum at 12 ½ cents. The type used was brought here long ago and intended for printing Catholic tracts in the Spanish language you will see they were forced to use two Vs wherever a W was required. Messrs. Walter Colton and Robert Sample are the head of the concern"

Writing to his sister in Plymouth, James Gleason again referred to the settling troubles in California: "I am happy to tell you that our country seems every day to be assuming a more tranquil appearance as if striving to reach a state of composure. The officers from Gen. Castro's army from this place have been permitted to return to their homes, but they were compelled to take oath that they would not, on pain of death, be found in against the United States during the present war. They have been welcomed home by the usual grand ball. The Spanish people here celebrate every happy event with music and dancing."

Another interesting event in 1846 in Monterey and about which Gleason wrote his sister in New England, was the impaneling of the first jury: "on the 4th Inst.

We impaneled our first jury in Monterey. It was in court of Mr. Colton and a promiscuous looking jury it was. It was composed of one-third Mexican, one-third Americans. The plaintiff spoke in English, the defendant in French, jurymen in Spanish, except the American portion and the witnesses testified in every known language under the sun, I was about to say. My friend, Mr. Hartnell, acting as court interpreter, his services in this line are invaluable. He is well versed in all tongues in use here and he is in frequent demand.

"The case in question was one of property and was fairly settled. Our Alcalde Mr. Colton is a man of rare good principals and sound judgment. He has the confidence of all classes." Colton was the clergyman, who arrived in Monterey as a chaplain and stayed on to be alcalde and the builder of Colton Hall.

Another note in a letter written from Monterey on Dec. 12, 1846, by James Gleason to Frances Gleason in Plymouth, has this bit of history to relate: "Near a month ago an engagement took place on the Salinas River about 15 miles from this place. It was between a party of about 150 Californians and 40 Americans. The Americans were coming from San Juan with about 300 horses which they had brought from the Sacramento to be used in the campaign if needed. The Californians were defeated and the horses recovered but not without loss of life on both sides. Capt. Foster and Capt. Barrows were both killed in the engagement. For one night the sentinel stars kept watch and the silent moon gleamed on their dead faces. The next day the dead were brought to Monterey and buried." We wonder where those graves are? It would be nice if there was a marker to their memory.

On Feb. 9, 1847, Gleason wrote again to his sister with a bit of news: "The U.S. Ship Cyane, commanded by S.F. Dupot has just come into port from San Diego. She has on Board General Kearney and Thomas O. Larkin who has been held a prisoner of war for about three months. He is looking well and was kindly treated although a prisoner of war in the town of Angels. There will now be a grand ball to celebrate his safe return. That is the way all happy events are celebrated in this town."

(To be Continued)