

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Happy Ending

Today we will continue with the romance of James Henry Gleason in the early days of Monterey's history—1847. Gleason had left his home in Plymouth, Mass, to assume the life of a seafarer. He went first to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands) to an uncle, John Paty who was in the mercantile business there. Later he took ship on the "Don Quixote" and arrived in Monterey in March 1846, where he went into business with another Uncle, Captain William Paty.

In the letter which announces an impending marriage we have found this story: I have just finished my fourth business letter to the Sandwich Islands, lit my cigar and now I am ready to devote my time to a dear acquaintance. I am not yet married, but tomorrow I intend to ask for the hand of Catarina Watson. We must be united. She is one of the loveliest, sister, that the world can boast of, a disposition that an angel might envy. Her father is a merchant in Monterey, worth about \$60,000. These are large numbers. However, I have hopes of success.

"Kate tells me that she loves, and she will wed me and no other. David Spence, my rival, has been her companion since infancy, yet my happy disposition and good looks has removed from her all the attachments she had for him, and charm of \$50,000."

Another letter written from Monterey contains this statement: "Nearly every afternoon a picnic in the woods with the señoritas and nearly every night a dance—our music, a guitar and harp, and for a partner, a Spanish maiden whose very existence is love. I imagine myself associated with angels while moving around in a waltz with these lovely beings. Their very language, the Castilian is sufficient to warm the coldest hear when they speak.

From romance Gleason turns his thoughts in this letter to the value of real estate when he writes his sister: "I have lately bought three large lots in this town about 300 yards. Intend to build me a house on one of the lots this year. The others I bought for speculation. My land is nearly in the center of the town and should be worth \$20,000. The authorities in this town, in order to bring into proper notice, have named of the principal streets "Gleason Street!"

It was May 30, 1847, before James Gleason popped the question for the hand of the lovely girl, Catarina Watson. He wrote his sister, "Her parents wished me to wait for 18 months and then ask her again as she is too young to marry, only 14 years of age. She tells me that she will have me and no other. Her father is worth about \$40,000. I am now enjoying the happiest days of my life, nothing but picnics and dancing."

After waiting the 18 months. Gleason wrote his New England sister: "Well Fanny, I'm married. My bonny Kate is now reclining over my shoulder. She understands but few words in English. I was married on the 7th of October at 3 o'clock in the morning. A large dinner party was given by her father, at his house in the afternoon and a dance followed in the evening; the expenses must have been early \$1,000. I am living in Monterey.

"To give you an idea of our speculations. I will mention that yesterday bought 200 pounds of flour at \$20. I am now about to ship it to San Francisco, where I am in hopes of clearing between \$4,000 and \$5,000. I was offered \$30 a barrel for it this afternoon and refused it.

On June 14, 1856, he again wrote his sister who apparently had married for now he addressed her as Mrs. Frances Tribble, Plymouth, Mass., "With me there has been but little change since my last letter home only that I am so many months older and apparently no better nor wiser than I was then. I occupy the same position, office hours from 10 to 12 and 2 to 4 and outside these most of the time out riding in the woods, lounging about the house or at work in the garden, occasionally light a cigar, do down town and 'put some one through' or get put through myself. My family affairs go on delightfully, all in the best of health. Kate is one of the best of wives, always cheerful, gay and loving, and the babies full of fun and mischief."