

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Front Page, News, Circa 1848

The California Star, a weekly journal published in San Francisco, and "devoted to the liberties and interests of the people of California," has been loaned to us by L.T. Tuck of Del Monte Park. The copy is dated April 1, 1848 and is Vol. II, No. 13 of the publication. Samuel Brannan, well known in San Francisco in the days of the middle 1880s, was the publisher.

The editorial which occupies the four columns which comprise the front page of the edition, recalls that "it is not more than 72 years ago when a band of honest, high-minded and true patriots, declared to the world that henceforth they were freemen, and England, proud powerful England had to submit; for if she knew not the men who had written this Declaration of Independence, she soon afterward became convinced of her error. She had lost her North American Colonies, 'the brightest jewel in her crown.' And a nation of freemen had sprung into existence.

Among advertisements in this early San Francisco newspaper is one extolling the virtues of the Aster House in Monterey, Alta California. It is dated Nov. 14, 1847, although the paper itself bears the date April 1, 1848. The ad reads: "The subscribers would respectfully notify the Traveling Public that this House has been thoroughly refitted for the reception of visitors. The table will be furnished with the best the market affords—wild game during season. The bar will be supplied with the choicest wines and liquors and every attention paid to the comfort and convenience of their guests.

"N.B. Horses fed on bran of grain and properly cared for. Signed J.D. Taber"

The Aster House later became what we now know as the Pacific building at the corner of Scott and Called Principal and is owned by Miss Margaret Jacks.

C.V. Gillespie advertised "Imports from China": Elegant embroidered crepe shawls of heavy weight and superior needlework, of the style diagonal, each in a carton; a few scarlet bandanas of superior quality; pongee handkerchiefs, each pair in a carton; silk cords and tassels; embroidered velvet slippers; vermilion and rouge, adapted to the India trade; lacquered ware; vases of large size and elegant, gunpowder, teal with

several other articles of Chinese manufacture, per "Eagle," from Canton direct.

Transportation was also advertised: "For Monterey and Santa Cruz. The fast sailing brig Henry will sail from this place, for the above ports, about the 1st of April. For freight or passage apply, C.L. Ross."

William Heath Davis, the author of "Seventy-Five Years in California," a book which is now a collector's item and an authority for historians, used the California Star to acquaint the early settlers with articles he "had just received by recent arrivals from the United States and the Sandwich Islands, among which were China chests and trunks, brass kettles, red flannel, pen racks, cotton socks, brass lamps, alpaca, corks, etc. All of which he offers cheap and for cash."

Cane bottom fancy chairs sold for 28 dollars per dozen and Italian gilt chairs for "36 dols per doz." According to an advertisement of great bargains submitted by the New York Store in San Francisco. Rocking chairs brought \$3 each and printed cambries were only 14 cts. a yard. Cotton lace for caps was advertised at \$1 per yard, black velvet was 75 cts. and a few sets of superior chess men were for sale but no price stated.

There appears in the Star a short editorial entitled "The Old Road" in which the editor states that he cannot too strongly urge upon emigrants the importance of keeping the well-defined old road to California. Their safety and that of their property, depends upon this. Parties that have followed this road have reached the country without difficulty, he writes, and last season all succeeded in bringing their wagons in. The last companies, he continues, arrived at the first settlements before the middle of October for it was not safe to be in the mountains later than the last of that month.

"We are happy to be able to say that California continues to be perfectly quiet. Castro has returned and surrendered himself, promising to obey our laws. For more than a year no disorders have occurred—the native Californians are beginning to mingle with our people, and are gradually turning their attention to agriculture." Is the information contained in a news story of 1848.