

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Early Baseball Teams**

Once upon a time Monterey was quite a baseball town, as was Carmel when the Abalone League was active. Both cities had their home town ball teams when the young men and even the girls, played ball. In Carmel the Abalone League used to gather in a sizeable audience to root for a favorite team or player out on a vacant lot near Carmel Point, then the crowd moved to vacant property in Carmel Woods.

In Monterey Cypress dated January 24, 1907, we found an advertisement for a theatrical group called the Elleford Company playing in the Work Theater in Monterey. In the cast of "My Tomboy Girl" playing the part of the servant "Possum," was a former Monterey boy by the name of George Hernandez.

In an interview with Hernandez published in the news section, the actor expressed surprise that Monterey no longer had a ball team. Before he took to the stage, he said, he played ball and ran foot races when he wasn't working at his trade as a printer. Evidently he was good at both sports for those who saw him acting in Monterey in 1907 that he was winning laurels on the stage.

Hernandez played with the old Monterey team in 1887. Ross Sargent and several who were later knee-deep in business cares in Monterey wore the uniforms of the ball club the same year. Mr. Sargent's home was on Cass street where Mrs. Sargent and her daughter, Mrs. Stuart Weill, are living today. Hernandez told the reporter in that 1907 interview that "Monterey had a pride in her ball team those days, and nothing was too good for a hero of the diamond."

There was lots of money bet on ball games, he added, and one occasion San Juan and Monterey were playing for a championship. In the ninth inning Monterey was one ahead and San Juan had two men out. The next visitor from San Juan knocked the ball a whizzing into the left field, which position Hernandez always played. Quick as a flash Hernandez stopped the ball and sent it to first, putting the San Juan man out and turning the game.

The gallery made a mad rush for Hernandez. Brad Sargent gave him a \$20 gold piece he recalled. Thomas Dodd passed him \$10 and conductor Morrison gave him

another \$10. So that day the one play brought him \$40. "Besides," said Hernandez, "they treated me like a King and gave me the freedom of his city."

"Monterey had sports those days," Hernandez declared. "They tell me now that the city does not support a ball team. That's a shame! Nothing advertises a town so much as a good ball team."

"Why in the '80s when I played here the merchants contributed liberally. There was a strong rivalry to have the best nine, and Monterey came pretty near having the best at all times. The players were rewarded and looked after. They were given good positions and appreciated, and the old town turned out in force too the games."