

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell Library

July 13, 1954

### **The First 'Foreigner'**

The first "foreigner" to locate in Monterey was John Cameron, alias John Juan Gilroy, who arrived in 1814. Robert Livermore came in 1816. W.E.P. Hartnell and David Spence in 1822, William Gale in 1824, J.B.R. Cooper in 1823 and Alfred Robinson.

They had landed for various purposes, some as deserters from merchant or whaling vessels, others to engage in business, while many came to obtain land and stock expecting that the United States would soon take the property, but they had to wait until 1846, when the American flag was hoisted at the Custom House for the first time on July 7.

John Bidwell arrived in Monterey in 1844 and he reported in later years that the leading foreigners at that time were Thomas Oliver Larkin, David Spence, W.E.P. Hartnell, James Watson, R.H. Thomas, Tabot H. Green, William Dickey, James McKinley, Milton Little and Dr. James Stokes. The principal natives were Gov. Micheltorena, Manuel Jimeno, Jose Castro, Juan Malarin, Francisco Arce, and Don Jose Abrego.

We have found an old clipping relating a bit about the life and habits of Juan Gilroy an early settler of Monterey and the man for whom the town of Gilroy was named. The article was written many years ago by Jack Swan, the pioneer of 1843 who built California's First Theatre in Monterey, now a State Historical Monument.

Swan began his article thus: "Fandangos were quite frequent and card playing in the shape of monte, was a favorite pastime. I have seen Gilroy and his wife and family, when they had no one else to play with, play at monte with one another."

"One Sunday afternoon I went out from the village for a walk with Gilroy and his brother-in-law. Cantin Ortega but, no sooner had they got a short distance from the houses when down went the serapes on the ground, out came the cards, and then commenced playing monte for money. Gilroy's wife must have been a very handsome girl when young. She was a fine looking woman when I saw her first in 1846, young, with beautiful eyes which, which when young, must have been jewels of the first water."

They raised considerable wheat then on and around San Ysidro ranch and Gilroy had a grist mill propelled by mule power, Swan wrote. The grain was trodden out on the ground by horses, after which it had to be washed and dried before it could be ground. At that time, it is known, San Ysidro was in the jurisdiction of Monterey, the low ridge between Ojo de Coce. Murphy's ranch, and San Ysidro being the dividing line between Monterey and San Jose.

With the occupation of the country by the United States, Gilroy gradually became poorer every day, for though he had grown sons, they had only been brought up to riding and attending cattle; in fact, few native Californians had to do much as the Indians did all the work on the ranch.

Jack Swan reported in his article: "I had not seen old Jack Gilroy for many years before his death. Having heard that the Pioneer Society in San Francisco had helped him in his old age, I made inquiry at their headquarters and was told that he had applied for assistance and was refused, for the reason that he did not belong to the society. Later when I spoke to David Spence about Gilroy he told me that the British Benevolent Society had assisted Gilroy in his old age."

To those who believe that "absence makes the heart grow fonder," Colton wrote of these men who had arrived in Monterey even before himself: "The U.S. ship Dale, sailed today for Panama. She takes the mail which will cross the Isthmus and reach the United States by way of the West Indies steamers. As soon as her destination was known a hundred pens were at work, transferring to paper affections, fond remembrances, kind wishes and a thousand tender anxious inquiries. How absence melts the heart!

The cold is kindled, the deferrent clothed with interest, antipathies melt away, and endearments revive with undying power—I love the very stone over which my truant footsteps ran, and could kiss the birch rod that chastised my youthful follies. What language then, can portray the love which clings to one who throws sunlight through the shadows of this dark world or paint the cherished hope that buds into being with childhood."