

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 26, 1954

Episcopal Centennial

On July 30, 1854, the Rt. Rev. William Ingraham Kip, D.D. held the first Episcopal church service ever held in Monterey in the then comparatively new Colton Hall (1847-1849). On July 30, 1954, that service will be repeated by the Rt. Rev. Karl Morgan Block, Bishop of the Diocese of California, in St. James Church, Monterey, at 8 a.m. to be followed at 11 a.m. with an observance of the centennial anniversary of the original service in Colton Hall.

Bishop Kip wrote in the first record which he titled "In the Early Days of My Episcopate, the service of our church had never been held in Monterey. Some years ago, on the first occupancy of the town by the Americans, the Rev. Walter Colton, chaplain in the U.S. Navy, a Congregational minister, was stationed here. He was appointed alcalde and while here erected a stone building for a town hall, which is now called Colton Hall. It is one of the most substantial public buildings in California.

"On Sunday morning for our service we had the court room in Colton Hall, the room in which the convention, which adopted the first constitution for this state, held its meetings. The congregation numbered about 60 and at the Holy Communion four came forward, some of whom had not for a long time enjoyed this privilege.

"In the afternoon the attendance was much larger as many of the Spanish ladies came in to witness the services though unacquainted with the language. After the second lesson I baptized five children.

"In the early part of the week I visited many of the Americans. They all expressed themselves as anxious to have the services of the church, but they were too few in number to take any steps toward this, nor is there any reason to suppose that Monterey will increase or strengthen its American population. In fact since my visit it has diminished, and the removal of Mrs. Boston's family has taken away the only one of any influence.

"Twelve miles distant on the Salinas Plains, I am told, an agricultural population is settling, but of course it is scattered at the ranches."

The Boston family of whom Bishop Kip refers were prominent residents of Monterey 100 years ago. Joseph Boston, the son of Alice Cecelia Wells Boston, had two

sisters, Alice Ann and Josephine Elizabeth. His aunt was Helen Wells Williams and his two cousins were Edward L. and Charles Williams. Joseph Boston married Eliza C. Bul in 1862. Following his death in Monterey, Mrs. Boston and her family moved to Santa Cruz. Edward Williams married Narcissa Watson, their daughter married Charles Pioda of Salinas and their son is Paul Pioda, an attorney in Salinas. Joseph Boston was a merchant and operated a store in the Casa del Oro, now a State Historical monument.

For almost 20 years there is an absence of records of any church service of the Anglican communion. On March 14, 1875, the Rev. J.S. McGowan, the builder of St. James Church on Pacific street, wrote in the record: "My first service at Monterey was given in the dance hall of the old Washington Hotel on March 14, 1875, to a congregation of 40 souls. At my next three appointments I had no congregation but I still continued the appointments and soon the services became an established fact."

May 2, 1875 the Rev. Mr. McGowan wrote: "My first administration of the Holy Communion was given in Monterey on this date."

It was soon considered advisable to erect a church building, and as there was no other "Protestant house of worship, all united in faithful and earnest work for the accomplishment of that purpose."

The church building (St. James) was erected in the autumn of 1876 and was consecrated by Bishop Kip, California's first bishop of the Episcopal church, on July 14, 1878. The record states that "this work was done before the railroad was built or Del Monte or Pacific Grove were thought of."

"St. James Church was the first Protestant church building raised in the old capital and from this small beginning, our church took root and has sent out a branch upon each side – St. John's and St Mary's-by-the-Sea."