

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 7, 1954

Mementos of 1846

Earth from Monterey is mingled with earth in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, where the body of Commodore John Drake Sloat lies buried. The mingling of the earth from the shores of California with that of Brooklyn occurred on Nov. 29, 1902, with members of the California Society of New York as the sponsors for the ceremony.

The dream of accomplishing this simple service in memory of the Navy officer who planned the event which led to the raising of the American Flag for the first time over the Custom House in Monterey, taking California for the United States, was Maj, Edwin A. Sherman of Oakland. It was Maj. Sherman who also planned and carried out the scheme to build the Sloat monument within the Presidio reservation and overlooking the Bay of Monterey. It is erected of stones furnished by the several counties and patriotic and historic organizations in California. He spent 10 years in getting Congress to make its first appropriation of \$10,000 for such a monument outside of the national capitol, and in securing and placing the stones from 35 counties, cities and organizations. There are 66 granite blocks in all.

In March of 1907 the U.S. Senate appropriated \$10,000 for the completion of the Sloat monument. During the morning of the 14th of March, 1910, the city council, headed by Mayor Will Jacks, met at the Custom House to welcome the commanding officer of the naval battalion, including the Yorktown. There was firing of salutes from the vessels of war in the harbor and artillery on shore. A flag was again raised over the Custom House by Victor Blue, senior officer commanding the squadron. Sloat's proclamation was read by Ensign George Joerms.

When the flag was first raised over the Custom House, Commodore Sloat and his men were deprived of the dramatic details of lowering the Mexican flag, for the simple reason that the Mexicans had outwitted them. The red and green ensign had been lowered several weeks before the Americans arrived.

The flag had been carried to Mission San Jose where Salvador Vallejo was comisionado. A daughter of Don Salvador rescued a piece of the red bunting – the green

portion having faded and worn thin – and presented half of it to Maj. Sherman the officer who instigated and pushed through to completion the completion of the Sloat monument.

Years later Maj. Sherman presented his piece to the City of Monterey. It is now in the museum of the Old Custom House, as well as another small piece of that original Mexican flag, given by Mrs. F. L. Knudsen. The later piece was presented to Col. Knudsen by Maj. Sherman.

These and other mementos of the historic event which took place 108 years ago on the shores of Monterey, were placed on exhibit, following the re-enactment of the raising of the American Flag over the Custom House today. Mrs. Mary Greene, the curator, is hostess within the building. The Monterey History and Art Assn., the Navy School and the Navy League, were co-sponsors for the event.

On March 21, 1910, the regimental stone was laid in the Sloat monument at the Presidio. Maj. Sherman was present at the setting of the stone, Maj. Sherman then was one of only three remaining members of the 8th Infantry who fought during the Mexican War.

The flag which was raised over the Custom House this morning was the one which was raised there in celebration of the 100th anniversary on July 7, 1946.