

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 22, 1954

Holy Week

"The president reported on May 21, 1844, with a note to the government in which he warned that after the first of July primary schools must be established in San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Monterey, San Jose, San Francisco, and Sonoma," according to a group of old records of the sessions of the Ayuntamiento (council) made on that date, a photostatic copy of which is in the California room at the Monterey library.

The president of the council on May 29 brought up a reminder from the Board of Health regarding the rations for the hospital and some hides and boards to serve as beds, to be paid for by municipal funds, as they were not able to give them better ones because of the scarcity of funds. This business was approved.

Senor Serrano proposed the nomination of a commission to revise and regulate weights and measures; this was approved and Councilmen Santiago, Watson and Trustee Salvador Munras were named as members of the commission for this important piece of business.

We turned to Bancroft's history of California to learn more of the life and interests of Florencio Serrano who, according to these 1844 records, seemed to have so much to say and so great an influence over the sessions of the Ayuntamiento during the Mexican rule.

We found these records:

"Florencio Serrano had held judicial positions under Mexican rule, and after the American occupation he succeeded Colton as alcalde of Monterey. A man of pure European blood, of fair education, and good repute, he was somewhat superior to his associates. In his old age, he was poor and blind, though not in want, as his sons cared for him and their mother. Before his death he dictated his 'Apuntes para la Historia de California', in which he gives a full statement of his life, and recollections of California affairs, throwing light upon many important topics, in excellent language and entertaining style. He manuscript is a voluminous one, and I (Bancroft) look upon it as one of the most valuable in my collection."

The Casa Serrano on Pacific street built by Florencio Serrano, is a good example of a story-and-a-half type of adobe. Serrano arrived in Monterey with the Hajar

colonists in 1834, became a teacher, a clerk, the secretary of the Ayuntamiento, secretary to the prefect, before becoming alcalde in 1848.

On March 26, 1844, Serrano proposed a permanent commission be nominated to deal with everything pertaining to (house) lots and the trustee and Esteban Torres were elected to that commission.

Expenses of the city were not quite as much in the year 1844 as they are today, for we found this notation on March 2: "The commission named to audit accounts and bills against the municipal treasury, incurred the previous year, reported the amount of \$51. It was resolved to pay on these debts recognized by the judges.

This interesting recording was made probably between the 18th and 24th of March: "Prohibition of the sale of liquor during Holy Week. Article I. The sale of liquor will cease from Holy Wednesday to Saturday of Holy Week.

"Article 2. All business houses will close from the first ringing of the bells to the same time above noted, being able to open on Friday, 'half of one of their doors' from eight o'clock in the morning.

"Article 3. No one must mount on horseback from Thursday at 8 a.m. till Holy Saturday."

Then continues four more articles on what is permitted and what not permitted during this religious observance of Holy Week. "Those who come from far off will dismount upon arriving at the first houses of the town. Those who on Holy Saturday must kill beasts will be ordered to keep them in their corrals or in one which is made for the purpose. It is prohibited from now on to keep animals in large quantities within the city limits under pain of paying 12 reales fine being always under the obligation of taking them away or paying the same fine for each day they remain there.

"It is forbidden from Holy Thursday to Holy Saturday to drive carts for any reason whatever in the middle of town. All citizens are charged with the tidiness of the streets in front of their houses, especially from Holy Thursday to Saturday. Those who fail to comply with any of the foregoing articles will suffer the utmost fine which the respective judge may impose."

Too bad that these ordinances are not still in effect, as well as the fines, especially on Pacific street, where we must see the trash left there by litter bugs each and

every day in the week throughout the year. And our tourist visitors see it too as they tour the historic route!

An undated recording in the minutes of the early day council gives this information: "Esteban de la Torre is appointed on a commission to raise a voluntary contribution from the citizens to defray the expenses of Holy Week, in view of the request of the pastor to the municipal government, saying that he did not have funds for the purpose. He reports having collected \$57."