

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 3, 1955

Monterey Was Wicked

On Wednesday we left Mrs. Allen, our old-time resident of the first wooden house in Monterey, telling Miss Lucy Morse, of her adventure in reconstructing a house here that had been made first in Australia. After relating the delightful tale of that one house she surprised her interviewer by announcing that she and her husband not only brought the one in which she had lived for fifty years but five additional ones which they set up in Monterey.

Miss Morse inquired, after listening to this fascinating story, if her husband, Timothy Bushton, had been a ship builder. Mrs. Allen replied that he had not, but he owned vessels and sailed them between our "country house and our city house." They bought grain when it was cheap and sold it when it was high. That was their business, she said.

Mrs. Allen described Monterey as it was when she first arrived in 1859. "It was a dreadfully wicked place. Gambling, swearing, and drinking" on the Lord's Day. Those were wicked times. No judge, no law, no anything. If anyone did wrong, only the military tried him. Often of a Sunday, my husband closed the door to keep out the noise and said, 'Why did I bring my children to such a wicked place to raise them?' "

The ship Elizabeth Starbuck, captained by Elijah Parker, and bringing the Bushton family, arrived in Monterey June 17, 1850, according to the records in the Bancroft Library at the University of California. She had a crew of 24 males and one female. Her passengers were 68 in number: 58 males and ten females. The Elizabeth Starbuck sailed under the American flag, which we cannot explain, for she sailed from Hobart Town, Tasmania.

The Bushton family consisted of Timothy Bushton and his wife, Jane; and the following children—Emma Ellen, age 11 years; George Charles about 9, Timothy age about 5, James John age about 4, Frances Catharine age about 2, and William about 1.

After their arrival, Bushton looked about for property upon which to construct the houses he had brought with him. It was not until September 1st that Timothy Bushton and John Hanson purchased a lot from Ygnacio Esquerra and his wife, Estefana. This property consisted

of Lots, 1, 2 and 3 as shown on a map of city lots surveyed July 1, 1850 by James Nooney for Esquerra. It was located across Munras from the property of Benito Diaz and comprised the southwest corner of Munras and Webster streets. The Monterey county files show that on Oct. 30, 1850, Bushton and Hanson mortgaged the property to David Spense for \$800.

On November 2, 1850, Bushton died, leaving a widow and six small children. From then on Jane Bushton Allen relates that she worked awful hard to bring up my children. "I washed all day and ironed all night. I washed for the rich gentlemen; they had plenty of money." she told Miss Morse. "They paid \$3 a dozen. Every pair of socks and every handkerchief counted as one piece."

Graciously Mrs. Allen showed Miss Morse the old house, which she described in her manuscript which is now the property of the Monterey History and Art Association and safely stored in the vault at the Stevenson House. "She led the way through a large uncarpeted room," Miss Morse related, "containing an old-fashioned bed, into a scrupulously clean kitchen, furnished with a set of shelves filled with dishes, a small cook stove, chairs, table, etc. As we passed, I noticed several open doors leading into comfortably furnished rooms. Evidently the six houses had been set up and connected. Never have I spent a more interesting hour. Her manner, her emphatic gestures, her simplicity, were charming."

But before Miss Morse had taken her leave, Mrs. Allen thought off telling her of the Custom House robbery. "My husband's partner rented one of the houses to a gang of thieves. One night when Dr. Randall, the Custom House officer, was at supper between 8 and 9 o'clock — it was the Sabbath night—they robbed the Custom House of \$30,000.

"The money was hid in this house. At first, I did not dare tell where it was for fear of my own and the childrens lives. At last, two gentlemen came to protect me and then I told. They could not convict them. Yes, they were lynched at last for firing a house in San Francisco. Yes. I have worked hard but I trust in God. God makes sick and makes me well. I never need a doctor."

(To be Continued)