

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 1, 1955

A Flag-Raising

The Monterey History and Art Assn., the Monterey Peninsula Council of the Navy league of the United States and the U.S. Naval Post-Graduate School are co-operation in a reenactment of the raising of the United States flag at the Custom House in Monterey on July 7, 1846. On July 7, 1955 the Stars and Stripes will again be raised on this historic spot, with appropriate ceremony. There will be a bugler, a color guard and a firing squad of 14 men from the Navy School. Adm. Frederick Moosbrugger, Commandant of the Navy, will read the proclamation of 199 years ago.

Capt. William Mervine, commander of the U.S.S. Cyane and U.S.S. Savannah, acting under orders from Com. John D. Sloat, raised the American Flag over the Custom House, without firing a shot, and proclaimed this vast territory as a part of the United States of America. The flag went up at 10:30 o'clock on that fair summer morning, as the western boundary of the United States was pushed to the Pacific ocean.

The Naval forces came smartly to attention before the Custom House. When the civilian throng had been quieted, Purser Rodman E. Price of the Cyane read Commodore Sloat's proclamation to the people of California, first in English and then in Spanish. The colors were hoisted by Passed Midshipman William P. Toler, the commodore's aide-de-camp, and Midshipman Edward Higgins.

As the Stars and Stripes rose to the top of the flagstaff and fluttered out before the mild southwesterly wind, a 21 gun salute boomed out across the quiet bay from the Savannah.

It was echoed by three rousing cheers of mixed feelings from the natives who watched the ceremony. The invading Americans had asked that the populace remain calm and promising that all rights and privileges now enjoyed in the several states would be extended to the residents of all California. The occupation was a peaceful one. It began at 10:20 in the morning when a detachment of 85 marines and 140 sailors was landed at the Custom House wharf from Commodore Sloat's squadron. The commodore was too ill to make the landing, but remained aboard the flagship, the 44-gun Frigate Savannah.

By noon, headquarters of the occupation forces had been established by Capt. Mervine at the Custom House and quarters were prepared for the Marines in the government building, the Cuartel now the setting for the Texas Co. gas station at Munras and Webster streets. The office of Gen. Jose Castro, military governor of California, who was absent from Monterey on that day, was also taken over by the Americans. His building was at the corner of Pearl and Tyler street, a landmark which has now also disappeared to make way for progress.

An American detachment also took immediate possession of El Castillo, the fort overlooking the anchorage, and heavy guns were brought ashore there late in the afternoon. American patrols tacked copies of official edicts to the doors of Monterey's most prominent buildings.

All businesses were closed for the day by the Americans. There was no liquor; no billiard games were in progress at Jose Abrego's place behind the Cuartel, and Dye's ten pin alley in Spence's store, was quiet reports Bancroft in his History of California.

The Montereyanos knew little about their new government. After the flag went up they broke slowly into small groups and discussed the rapid turn of events which had released them from the Mexican yoke, but brought a new order which they did not understand. And so they reflected over the changed government of their state in one bloodless day.