

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **More About Schools**

The educational life of the young people of Monterey was a most difficult one before 1850, for the teachers could not speak the Spanish language, and none of the pupils could speak English. At the end of the first three months Mrs. I. C. Isabell, the teacher of the first public school in Monterey, declined to teach any longer, and the youth of the community had no further teaching until March 1849. In that year the Rev. Samuel D. Willey arrived in California and settled in Monterey and opened a public school in Colton Hall.

The Rev. Mr. Willey had about 50 pupils. but speaking no Spanish, he had as much difficulty in teaching as Mrs. Isabell. This school was continued six months and then closed as Mr. Willey decided to move to San Francisco.

Guinn's history relates that in 1856 Monterey is credited with a public English school of 15 children and two private schools taught in the Spanish language. The public school was probably taught in the Custom House, but in 1872, the county seat being moved to Salinas, the supervisors rented Colton Hall for the purpose.

The public schools of Monterey struggled along as best they could until the coming of the railroad, then the old capital took on new life. The population rapidly increased with an energetic wide-awake people, an excellent system of schools was established and early in the 1890's they erected a fine school building.

Before the coming of the railroad to Monterey County the offices of superintendent of schools and county clerk were combined which was bad for the clerk, but worse for the schools, for the superintendent could not give them the attention they deserved. Some of the schools were 60 miles distant, with the only means of communication either by horseback or horse and buggy. Later the two offices were separated but the superintendent's salary was so small that he was compelled to teach school to make a living, and the conditions were no better than before. Finally, he was elected for a term of four years and given a salary of \$1,650 and traveling expenses.

In the early 1870's a slate normal school was established, and the graduating classes sought employment throughout the state. About this same

time the State Legislature passed a law organizing county boards of education and empowering them to grant county certificates on examination. The normal schools and the graded teachers had a tendency to raise the grade of the Monterey schools, as no teacher could draw a county salary without a certificate to teach.

Another law was passed that each county should annually hold a teachers' institute, and in September 1872, an institute was held in Monterey, the first in the county, 50 teachers responded to roll call.

In 1909 Monterey had 10 teachers and Salinas had 12 teachers in the primary and grammar grades. In 1905 Monterey High School had five teachers and 36 pupils in attendance. Pacific Grove High School had four teachers and 83 scholars; Salinas had five teachers and 119 pupils.

In 1849 Monterey had a good library, the first in the state, which was an excellent help to the public-school student. The founder of this library, Samuel H. Willey, said, "Before I became too busy, I proposed the subject of a library to the people and they entered heartily into my plans and \$1,500 was subscribed, the soldiers donating liberally. Having in my possession some catalogues of a New York house, which I had brought out for the east, I made selections, sent on for the books, and in due time they arrived. Various additions were made from time to time from the ships that came into port and soon me library obtained some 2,500 volumes. A reading room was connected with the library."

In 1907, Guinn reports, the city had a neat little library of 2,325 volumes, in the second story of the Rowe building on Main street, now Calle Principal. It was supported by means of entertainment, concerts, lectures. parties, etc. Miss Etta Eckhart was the librarian.