

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 15, 1955

### **Lt. Alfred Sully**

We had a pleasant visit this week with Langdon Sully of 39 Marcate Lane in Bergenfield, N.J. The fact that Mr. Sully is the grandson of Lt. Alfred Sully, a member of the famous New York Volunteers, made our meeting both interesting and profitable. Lt. Sully arrived in Monterey with the volunteers in 1847, was a member of the troop of amateur actors who produced the first plays in the adobe building now known as California's First Theater and married a descendant of one of California's "first families."

Mr. Sully came to Monterey more than 100 years later to seek out information of his grandfather's life in California and readily admitted that he was surprised at the fund of personal stories and historical items that he was privileged to acquire during his brief stay on the Peninsula.

We were also thrilled to learn that Mr. Sully is in possession of about 600 letters which the lieutenant had written to his family, and that his grandson is planning the publication of a book in which most of these letters will be included. Sully is a member of the faculty of Columbia University and is on a holiday combining business with a vacation. Traveling with his wife, Mary Walker Sully, and two young sons, Jeffery and Thornton Harris Sully, the family has combined flying, train and automobile to the West Coast and are repeating this varied mode of transportation on the return journey to the East Coast, both for their own pleasure and for the entertainment of the small boys.

Lt. Alfred Sully graduated from West Point in 1837 after which he took part in the Civil War and then joined the Indian expedition, taking part in several of the greatest Indian battles up to September 1863. At White Stone Hill in South Dakota there is a monument erected by the state in memory of Lt. Sully and a county in that state has also been named in his honor. In Monterey, the fascinating love story of his courtship and marriage to Manuelita Jimeno is still being told.

Among the letters of Lt. Sully, which Mr. Sully treasures, is one which tells his family of the gift of a sizable piece of timber land which the grandfather of Manuelita, Don Jose de la Guerra of Santa Barbara, had given to the young couple. He relates that the land is a day's ride

from Monterey. Upon his bride's sudden death, he returned the land to the giver and left California. He remained in the Army and made it a career, finally attaining the rank of general.

During Lt. Sully's stay in Monterey, 1848-1852, he very soon began to show his artistic ability and the drawings and paintings he made while here are now valuable historical items and much sought after by collectors. He painted a series of pictures of Western forts in addition to the picture of the Army's headquarters in Monterey.

In the California Pictorial, published by the University of California Press, there is reproduced a "Street Scene in Monterey, 1847," a view taken from the old fort on the hill with the present Presidio property. The original of this painting is now in the Bland Galleries in New York City. The most prominent building in the street scene is El Cuartel, where Col. Richard B. Mason established his headquarters soon after California was admitted as a state in 1850, thus making Monterey the first capital, for a short time, of California.

The watercolor from Sully's brush shows El Cuartel with an outside stairway which led directly to Mason's office on the second floor, a convenience built by the Americans. The south end of the huge building, with a view of the bridge on Munras avenue was picked by Sully for his painting.

Sully was the son of the famous portrait artist, Thomas Sully. The senior Sully, the great grandfather of our recent visitor, was born in England in 1783. He lived in the United States from early childhood and studied with a miniature painter and also with Gilbert Stuart. In 1809 he spent several months working under Benjamin West in England. Returning to this country he established himself in Philadelphia as a portraitist.

He again returned to England in 1837 to paint a portrait of Queen Victoria for the Society of the Sons of St. George in Philadelphia. A study of that head, painted from life and very charming, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He also painted portraits of Presidents Jefferson and Monroe, as well as various generals of the Military Academy at West Point. A full-length portrait of Lafayette, painted in 1824, hangs in Independence Hall in Philadelphia.