

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 18, 1955

New York Volunteers

Lt. Alfred Sully, as we told the readers in Friday's issue of the Peninsula Diary, was the grandfather of Langdon Sully of New Jersey who spent a day in Monterey last week doing some research into the period of the lieutenant's life which he spent in Monterey, 1848 to 1852. During those years Lt. Stilly was a member of the New York Volunteers and one of the actors who produced plays at what is now the First Theater.

Among the company which arrived in Monterey to be disbanded after the Mexican War was over and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had been ratified (Feb. 2, 1848) were some New Yorkers. Some of the men, tired of barrack life, put on plays first in El Cuartel, later, out of doors. To these no admittance was charged but when the paychecks were certain to be withdrawn, they decided to make the adventure pay. Soon they obtained a promise from Jack Swain that he would provide the sailors' rooming house in his adobe building on Calle Estrada (Pacific street), as the setting for their performances. Very soon the success of the venture was proved with the production of "Putnam, or the Lion Son of '76." A stage had been built less than a foot from the floor, at the south end of the room, with a wooden curtain, raised and lowered by a rope and pulley system. The curtain of wood is still in place.

Bancroft states that at this first performance only five women were in attendance, but the night's performance brought in \$500 for the performers. In the cast was Lt. Alfred Sully, C. E. and Lizzie Bingham, and Lt. Derby—the latter, the famous wit who wrote later under the famous name of "Squibob"—and Maj. John O'Neill and Mrs. O'Neill. The latter couple remained in Monterey and their granddaughter; Mrs. Nellie Fleisher still lives in the family home on Monroe street. Other plays which these old time "troopers of the Gold Coast" produced were: "Box and Cox," "Damon and Pythias," "Grandfather Whitehead," "The Golden Farmer," and "Nan, the Good-for-Nothing."

During these days in Monterey Lt. Sully met, fell in love with and married the Spanish Senorita Manuelita Jimeno, daughter of Dona Augustias Jimeno and granddaughter of Don Jose de la Guerra of Santa Barbara. The latter was one of California's most respected Spanish settlers.

About the middle of 1850 When young women of cultured Spanish families were not allowed out of their homes unchaperoned, the beautiful Manuelita had met the young Sully and probably was as greatly impressed by the young officer, a graduate of the Naval academy, as he was by her beauty and charming manners.

One evening Manuelita asked permission of her mother to visit the home of Capt. and Mrs. Elias Kane, who resided in the old Garner home on Pacific street opposite the end of Decatur. Her mother, unsuspecting, granted her wish but at the same time ordered her to be properly chaperoned and asked Dr. James Ord to perform that pleasant duty.

When the doctor and Manuelita arrived at the Kane home, Mrs. Kane invited the young lady upstairs, with the excuse she wished to show her some newly acquired possessions. Dr. Ord waited below. After some time, down the stairs came Lt. Sully and his bride, followed by the priest, Mrs. Kane, and a few members of the family. The marriage caused a break for many months between the young Sully's and her mother, but when a baby was born to the happy couple a reconciliation took place. Tragically, this did not last long; both mother and baby died soon after. Mrs. Jimeno later married Dr. Ord.

William Rich Hutton, surveyor, in "Glances at California, 1847-1853," included in his diary and wrote to his mother in the East a bit of gossip from Monterey: "I found things very much altered here. Manulelita's marriage to Lt. Alfred Sully has caused a great deal of ill feeling. The dona is the same as ever toward me. She has a little baby but is very sick and will hardly live long. I am glad I was not here at the wedding time."