

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 7, 1955

Box From the Sea

Alfred Sully, son of the famous painter Thomas Sully, was stationed at the Monterey Presidio during 1849-1851. During that time, he met and married Manuelita Jimeno, the lovely 16-year-old daughter of Dona Angustias Jimeno and granddaughter of Don Jose de la Guerra of Santa Barbara.

Before the marriage of the young Yankee lieutenant and the Spanish senorita, Sully had been a frequent visitor in her home which was a large adobe brick residence where the San Carlos Hotel now stands. He wrote many letters to his famous father in Philadelphia telling him of the Dona's kindness to him, so the father, in appreciation, wrote his son that he was painting a religious picture for Dona Angustias and would soon forward it to California to be delivered at Monterey.

Months passed and one day a man walking on the beach at Monterey, came across a large flat box which had been washed in by the tide. The box bore the name of Dona Jimeno. The finder hastened to the Jimeno home bearing the news. Very soon two stout Indians were sent to bring the box to the adobe. Upon opening the outer box and then the tin box, there was found the painting of "Christ Blessing Little Children."

Now we know that the above story is true for a letter written by young Sully to his artist father, Thomas Sully, has been sent to us by his grandson, Langdon Sully of New Jersey, in which he explains how best to send the picture to California. We quote: "I am glad to hear of the present Father intends for the Dona. It will be much appreciated. As to the sending of it. You can do so safely any time, by Adams Express Co. direct to me at Monterey, or better yet if you have not already done so, Mr. Alfred Robinson, agent for the steamers, is now in New York, will leave on the steamer on the first of May for this place, with his wife, who is a sister of Dona Angustias. The picture sent him at Howlands and Aspenwalls, the steamer men in New York City, would be attended to."

Robinson married Anna Maria, the daughter of Done Jose de la Guerra and their wedding is beautifully described in Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast."

"I intended to have sent you some more gold by the last steamer with Lt. Sherman, but have decided to

speculate a little with it," wrote Sully to his father. Lt. Sherman was William Tecumseh Sherman, later to be known as General Sherman of Civil War fame. While in Monterey Sherman, serving as Adjutant-general, occupied the small adobe at the back of the old garden at the Larkin House, taking his meals with Dona Angustias, as did Lt. Sully.

Again, Sully refers to the beauty of Monterey: "The country begins again to look beautiful, climate very pleasant except when it rains, for then it pours. . . . The other day a mule was mired in the street and died in his cart. Monterey is growing more and more American every day, i.e., rowdy, plenty of gambling and drinking shops and all the other refinements of civilized life."

In another letter dated Feb 28, 1850, young Sully again speaks of the painting which his father intends to send to Dona Angustias Jimeno, and asks that he stuff the cracks of the box in which he ships it, with segars (cigars), saying: "Such a thing I have not seen since I left home. Here we use the weed in the form of a pipe. Segars are bad and worth 12 1/2 cents apiece. I am at present occupying my spare time in surveying town lots here. Making \$20 to \$30 a day. Does very well for spending money."