

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 20, 1956

### **Glimpses of History**

A number of years ago there was quite a turmoil aroused, in the National Capitol over a novelist's description of George Washington as a user of hard words and a distiller of hard liquor, which incited certain investigators in California to search the state library for authentic information on the personal habits of illustrious Californians.

Among those whose reputations survived the semi-scholarly probe were the sea-faring men who helped to wrest California from Mexican rule in 1846. Writing in his diary about the crew of the U.S.S. Savannah, one of the squadron of American Naval Vessels which seized the strategic port of Monterey, the first Alcalde, or Mayor of Monterey, the Rev. Walter Colton reported :

"It is much to the credit of the officers of this ship that though without a chaplain, they have had, during three years cruise, their religious services regularly on the sabbath.

"Four of their number, two lieutenants, the surgeon and master, are professors of religion and exert a deep Influence through their consistent piety. Their sabbath exercises have consisted in reading prayers, selections from the scriptures, and a brief pertinent sermon. They have had also their sabbath school.

"Such facts as those," concludes the alcalde "will win for the navy a larger share of public confidence than the capture of forty barbaric fortresses."

– From the files of The Herald of twenty years ago.

On January 19, 1916 there appeared this news item in the Monterey Cypress:

"Fortification of the Monterey Presidio has commenced. This preparedness consisted of the placing of an old Spanish cannon on the brow of the hill overlooking the monument. The cannon is dated 1622 and is probably the oldest piece of shooting apparatus on the coast. This antique has been returned from the Monterey County exhibit at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.

"The gun was mounted in Monterey under occupation of the Spanish and was recovered in 1864; several feet under the ground near the old Mexican fort, the first fort in the state."

A short time ago we announced the gift to the Monterey History and Art Association of an antique wall clock by the Cummings brothers of Monterey. It had been in the Cummings Jewelry store at the end of Alvarado for many years but before that it had had an adventurous life of travel and disaster. In 1849 it had been brought around the Horn by Grandfather Cummings on board the "Niantic," went through a fire in San Francisco and was carried out of a flood in Sacramento in 1851 on the elder Cumming's back.

In January 1850, 106 years ago, there appeared this note in the San Francisco papers: "Owners of the ship "Niantic," foot of Clay street, announce the ship is ready to receive storage. Terms \$1.00 monthly per barrel of about 196 pounds, \$10 monthly per ton of 40 cubic feet."

On January 1, 1850, the San Francisco papers carried this bit of social news: "The wife and children of the noted pioneer, Captain Sutter, arrived on the steamer Panama today. The family has been separated for many years."

Another historic item appeared on Jan. 23, 1850, which told the readers that: "A bill was passed today in the legislature of the new state of California to divide into 25 counties: San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Branciforte, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Mount Diablo, Marin, Sonoma, Solano, Yolo, Mendocino, Sacramento, Coloma, Sutler, Yuba, Butte, Colusa, Shasta, Trinity, Calaveras, Tuolumne and Mariposa."

"California's senators and congressmen-elect are now enroute via Panama to Washington, D.C., to press for California's admission to the United States, as the 31st state, in accordance with the citizens' overwhelming vote at last November's elections."

Mrs. Viola Beal Livingston, the widow of Col. Max Livingston, U.S. Army, has been a visitor in Monterey during the past few weeks. She was the house guest of Mr. and Mrs. Derek Ward of Salinas. Mrs. Livingston was interested in learning more about California history and the activities of her granduncle, General Edward F. Beale, the former owner, of the huge Beale rancho near Bakersfield on which Fort Tejon is located. Mrs. Livingston is the granddaughter of the late Truxton Beale of Washington, D.C.

General Edward Fitzgerald Beale, in his capacity of commissioner of Indian affairs for California and

Nevada, had recommended the establishment of a military post about 15 miles southwest of the Sebastian Indian Reservation for the purpose of protecting the friendly Indians in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

Another interesting piece of history of Fort Tejon concerns the Camels in California. Under the direction of the Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, camels were imported into this country in 1857, the army planning to use them in transporting supplies to isolated posts in the arid southwest. A group of 28 camels was marched to Fort Tejon from near San Antonio, Texas. The wagon road survey party to which the camels were attached was under the direction of General Beale.