

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Our Grizzly Bear Flag

The announcement that the Monterey History and Art Assn., in cooperation with the Navy League, will sponsor an eighth celebration of the anniversary of the raising of the United States flag at the Old Custom House on July 7, 1956, brings forth reason for recounting what took place at the other seven observances.

In 1905 the Native Sons of the Golden West, with appropriate and well attended ceremonies, unveiled a plaque at the Custom House forever reminding the visitor of the historic event which took place there in 1846. The plaque is on the outside wall facing Alvarado street, where one often sees a tourist pause to read the inscription.

At the 1905 celebration the late William Sandholdt, Monterey publisher, Congressman Joseph R. Knowland and Ross Sargent were the speakers. Mr. Knowland is now the publisher of the Oakland Tribune, chairman of the California State Park Commission and a part time resident of the Monterey Peninsula Country Club. Judge Ross's family still resides in the old home on Cass street.

In 1936 the people of Monterey again joined together to pay homage to Sloat and to his contribution to the country's history. They enacted the first raising of the flag at the Custom House with the aid of the personnel from the U.S. Cruiser Minneapolis, then in the bay for the Fourth of July celebration, and 11th Cavalry units from the Presidio of Monterey, under command of Trooper Miller.

Watchword of that celebration. according to the files of The Herald of that date, was: "If there had not been a Seventh there wouldn't be a Fourth."

Among those mentioned on the program were Laura Bride Powers, curator of the Custom House; Carmel Martin, Monterey History and Art Assn.; Chief of Police Fred Moore; Mayor Walter Teaby; City Mgr. Bill Pardee; Capt. C. H. J. Keppler, commanding the Naval units and Col. Roger Fitch.

In the afternoon a portrait of William Toler, the man who actually raised the flag here in 1846, was dedicated in the Custom House Museum with music by the WPA Tipica orchestra. The picture still hangs in the Custom House as does one of Cmdr. John Drake Sloat.

In 1946 the 100th anniversary of the flag raising event was doubly interesting and historic because the original site of the first flagpole had been discovered and a new pole of Monterey pine had been raised near the northeast corner of the Custom House. There is also a bronze plaque at the foot of the pole placed there by the State Centennial Committee. The site was discovered by a group of young archaeologists from the University of California under the direction of Dr. Aubrey Neasham, historian for the Division of Benches and Parks. It was at the (we might almost say) insistence of Mrs. Mary Greene, curator of the Custom House, and the directors of the History and Art Assn., that the search was made by using a pen and ink drawing made in 1847 showing the pole where it is at the present time. The artist made the drawing from the hillside within the Presidio, or fort as it was then called.

Another flag raising event at Interest to California was the raising of the Bear Flag on June 14, 1846 - about three weeks earlier than the raising of the Stars and Stripes over Monterey.

Thirty-five years ago, today, Feb. 3, 1911. the Bear Flag, as the standard of the "California Republic," was adopted as the state flag by legislative enactment.

The original watercolor sketch of the Grizzly bear, as used on the Bear flag by Charles Nahl, hangs in the museum at Colton Hall. It was presented to the City of Monterey by Mrs. Augusta Nahl Allen of Portland. Ore., who was the niece of Charles Nahl. Her father was Arthur Nahl, a brother of the artist. The presentation was made several years ago through Miss Nellie K. Smith of Pacific Grove, a friend of Mrs. Allen.

Within the past week Miss Smith has again acted as an intermediary; this time for John Guintyllo of 311 Del Robles, Monterey, in presenting to the Monterey History and Art Assn. a photostatic copy of the original drawing as shown on the Bear flag and on the great seal of the State of California.