

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 6, 1956

### **Commodore Sloat's Landing**

Tomorrow we will honor Commodore John Drake Sloat the great naval officer who sailed into Monterey Bay on July 7 and captured California for the United States without firing a single shot. The U.S. was raised over the Custom House for the first time (officially) at 10 o'clock, in the morning and the country was taken from Mexico. The Mexican flag had been pulled down by the Mexicans before the landing of the Americans and all was peace and quiet when the important ceremony took place.

Commodore Thomas ap Catesby Jones was the first American to capture Monterey, under the erroneous impression that the United States and Mexico were at war. The date of the capture was Oct. 19, 1842, when Jones was commander of the United States Pacific Squadron. He hoisted the U.S. flag over the castillo and the Californians signed articles of capitulation without a struggle. Two days later, upon discovering that he had been misinformed about the war and the suspected cession of California to England, Commodore Jones took down the American flag, restored the town to the Californians, fired a salute to send a message of apology to Gen. Manuel Micheltorena at Santa Barbara, who was then on his way north from Mexico to assume the governorship.

Reproductions of photographs of Commodore Sloat, Commodore Jones and of William Toler, the man who actually raised the flag, are on display in the Old Custom House.

Commodore John Drake Sloat was born in New York in 1780. He entered the Navy as a midshipman in 1800 and was honorably discharged the following year. He re-entered the Navy as a sailing master in 1812 and served on the frigate United States for three years during which time he participated in the capture of the British frigate Macedonian in 1812.

During the next several years he participated in many battles and captured a number of vessels of importance. From 1840 to 1844 he commanded the Navy yard at Portsmouth, N.H., following which he took command of the Pacific Squadron. After capturing Monterey, he took possession of San Francisco until relieved by Robert F. Stockton.

Sloat commanded the Norfolk Navy yard, 1847 to 1851, and was construction superintendent of the Stevens Battery, 1851-55. Retiring in 1861, he was promoted to commodore on the retired list in 1862 and to rear admiral in 1866.

The board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Assn. met last Monday afternoon in the Old Pacific building for a regular monthly meeting. Reports were given by Allen Knight on the progress of plans for the reenactment of the first raising of the U.S. flag on the Custom House on July 7, 1846, for which he is chairman; Miss Ethel Solliday on the publication of the booklet "Old Pacific Capital" written by Robert Louis Stevenson during his stay in Monterey; and by Mrs. Mary Greene on the California Conference of Historical Societies held in San Jose recently.

R. H. Partridge, a director of the History and Art Association, spoke briefly on his recent European visit and expressed an enthusiastic desire that Monterey will continue to preserve its historical heritage and its old adobe buildings that visitors may continue to make pilgrimages here to see them just as they flock to Europe to see the ancient cathedrals and beautiful scenery.

Directors present were: Mesdames W. R. Holman, F. L. Knudsen, Maria Antonia Thompson, Mary Greene, Wesley Heard, W. M. O'Donnell, Charles Mason, Misses Margaret Jacks and Ethel Solliday; Messrs. J. F. Van Loben Sells, the president; Allen Knight, Myron Oliver, Carmel Martin, R. H. Partridge, Guy Curtis, Howard Severance and Claude Faw.