

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 7, 1957

The Sherman Rose Lady

A letter written in 1935 by Robert J. Richards of Daly City to the late Mrs. Mabel O'Connell Moran, and presented to the Monterey History and Art Assn. by her daughter Mrs. Claire Davison, will be of interest to our readers, because of the charming senorita of whom he writes—Maria Ignacia Bonifacio.

Mr. Richards wrote: "I have read your write-up, also Alice Baird's concerning Miss Bonifacio—the Sherman Rose Lady. You are correct, Dan O'Connell did not invent the love affair between General Sherman and the Senorita. It is all truth as you say in your story. I will tell you what I know concerning this story.

"My mother and her people came to Monterey in the year 1848. They were colonists coming from lower California, sailing from San Jose del Cabo, Cape San Jose, on board the U.S. American War Frigate Lexington with many more who were given free passage to Monterey by the U.S. Government.

"My mother was a young girl of 18 years of age. She married my father in Monterey in 1854 and her oldest daughter Mary was born in Monterey in 1856. I was the next child, born in 1858. I am now 77 years old. This lady, Senorita Maria Bonifacio was our God-Mother, when both of us were baptized in San Carlos church. Her brother, Don Juan Bonifacio, was our God-Father. We always called the Senorita our Madrina. My mother was well known to Lieut. Sherman and Lt. Halleck, they often visited our mother and her mother, Dona Josefa Hipolito de Trasvina, our grandmother. They cooked and made tamales, enchiladas, carne con chili, frijoles, and a lot of other Spanish dishes. They kept all their laundry in order and washing and ironing.

"My mother often told me how Lt. Sherman and Lt. Halleck visited the Monterey folks and that Lt. Sherman visited her friend, Senorita Maria Bonifacio. She told of the rose bush also which grew very large and as the years went by it covered the walk from the gate to the front of the house. As the "Pioneer Gentleman" claims, he and a friend planted this rose in the 1871. I was then a young school boy going to school in the old adobe Cuartel, back in the 1860's. My folks at that time were living in the old log fort up on the hill.

"Every day going and coming from school we would stop at our Madrina's home on Alvarado street, at our mother's request, to inquire as to her health. Often we used to do errands for Senorita Maria Bonifacio. Miss Mary Doud and my sister, Mary, were great friends and we were all school mates. The Ashley family and all the old time Monterey people were friends of my mother, who was Carmen Simbrenos de Richards.

"My father came to Monterey in 1852. He was a justice of the peace and superintended the building of the old granite county jail, next to Colton Hall in 1854.

"My mother often told us that our Madrina never married but that she expected Lt. Sherman to return and make her his bride. The Senorita was a Pinto on her mother's side. She was a full cousin of Senora Dolores Osio, who died in Monterey a few years ago at 103.

'As Senorita Bonifacio and my mother were devoted friends, often times Mother told me about their love for the two young lieutenants. Sherman and Halleck. She spoke very often of Lt. H.W. Halleck, describing him as being very handsome and that he looked so well in his uniform. I then would ask her if she would have married him and she always said 'yes, but he left Monterey and never returned'.

"I never forgot the time the big cannon that was on the Point of Barracks at the Presidio was to be fired this was in 1868—and afraid of the noise the report would make, I got a large rough iron nail and spiked it and so it did not fire. "Sincerely yours, Robt. J. Richards."

Miss Mary Doud, who is written of in the Richards letter, lived in the charming long wooden house at the end of Van Buren street near Scott. It was built in the early American period by her father, Francis Doud, who arrived in Monterey in 1849. Mr. Doud was the sergeant at arms at Colton Hall during the First Constitutional Convention. Miss Doud never married. Anita Ashley whose family is also mentioned in the letter, married Daniel O'Connell, the father of Mrs. Moran and grandfather of Mrs. Davison, who gave us the letter. When she became Mrs. O'Connell, Miss Doud was her bridesmaid.

Daniel O'Connell became a well-known writer and poet. One of his poems is etched into the monument in the Friendly plaza, near Colton Hall.

Miss Osio and her family lived in the Osio Adobe on the west side of Alvarado near Franklin street where there

is now an historic marker. It was in this home that many of the social gatherings were held during the 1849 convention.

The Bonifacio adobe or as it is more often called, The Sherman Rose House, was transplanted from Alvarado street when the First National Bank of Monterey was built, to the Monterey Mesa where it was reconstructed by the late J.C. Anthony for the late Percy Grey, a prominent artist of a few years ago. It is now the home of Mrs. Guy Catlin.

Senorita Bonifacio died in Monterey on Jan. 5, 1916, and is buried in the Monterey Catholic cemetery. No marker appears on her grave.