

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **An Old Well**

We learn from Miss Hattie Morey's story, written in 1896 for "Stretches of Leading Places of Interest in Monterey," a publication of the Monterey Public School, that the last room on the upper floor of the Old Pacific House was used as a ballroom in the early days. The entertainments were given by a temperance society known as the "Dashaways."

The old well in one of the lower rooms remains and maybe Mrs. William Kneass, the curator there, will point it out to visitors when that State Historical Monument is opened to the public as a museum. It was presented to the State of California by Miss Margaret Jacks a few years ago and is at present under renovation in preparation for the installation of exhibits.

This old well supplied the steamers and schooners with water as it furnished the best water to be had and was the most accessible.

Tin- back yard which is surrounded by a high adobe wall was a place of a great excitement and amusement. Miss Morey noted. Great bear and bull fights took place there in the summer of 1864. They were given by the Mexicans and Spaniards. The price of admission was 25 cents, but all those who could climb up the wall could see for nothing and it used to be black with people anxious to see. The fights were held every Sunday and people came from all the adjoining towns to see them.

Miss Morey learned through interviews with former owners and townspeople that Mr. David Jacks bought the Pacific House from Mrs. Allen. He repaired it both inside and out and during the years following repurposed. Jacks used the upper floor for church services excepting one or two rooms which were used by individuals.

"The stairs have been removed and now face the beach. The surrounding porches still remain and the building (?) able to last for many a day." With this statement, Hattie Morey ended her story in 1896.

"In point of age, the Custom House is the most interesting public building in all of Monterey," Harry Olmsted wrote in "Sketches of Leading Places of Interest in Monterey," printed by the Monterey Public School in 1896.

"There are conflicting statements as to when the different portions of it were built, but as nearly as can be determined, it seems that the foundation of the central part was laid when California and Mexico were under the same flag."

We hope that our readers took time from their daily routine to drive by the Custom House within the last week to see it minus the coat of white plastering on the outside. In its bareness the old adobe building revealed the various divisions of early construction and proved that additions had been added as additional space was demanded.

Harry Olmsted is the brother of the late Charles Olmsted, a prominent resident of the Monterey Peninsula. He now makes his home at 2736 Kingsland Ave., Oakland.

In the early days of the American occupation the revenues of the Custom House were considerable, as Monterey was the port where duties were paid by all vessels trading to the Mexican Department or Territory of California. There was sufficient business at times to support two or three Custom House officials.

Young Olmsted wrote in his essay: "Immediately following the raising of the American flag July 7, 1846, the Custom House was occupied by officers of the United States Frigate Savannah who used the central part of the building as a ballroom. The north tower was used as the headquarters of Capt. Mervine of the U.S. Navy, who had command of the force."

The following men have been collectors of customs in Monterey: King, Randall, Watson, Isaac Wall and J. T. Porter of Pajaro. The inspectors at different times were William D. Robinson, who was still living in Monterey in 1896, D. K. McDougal, Dr. C. A. Canfield, H. C. Ireland, and William L. Carpenter, after whose term the inspectorship was abolished. At the time (1896) that Harry Olmsted wrote his article, he reported Capt. T. G. Lambert of Monterey had been in charge of the Custom House, as custodian, for 23 years, and during the same time used it as a dwelling. Capt. Lambert was an uncle of Mrs. Millie Birks whose residence is at Scott and Tyler streets in Monterey, and who made her home in the Custom House with Capt. and Mrs. Lambert. The captain was succeeded by J. Ruurds, who was in possession in 1896.

During Collector King's administration, in 1850, the Custom House was robbed of \$30,000. It was

afterwards found, and the thieves were apprehended and tried, but were not convicted; they confessed their crime in San Francisco, where they were executed for other crimes which they had committed.

During Collector Wall's administration a row-boat carrying a box containing \$8,000 in gold capsized between the vessel and the wharf and went to the bottom, and, as Capt. Lambert said at the time, "It is out there somewhere yet."