

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 6, 1957

### **The Larkin House**

"One of the most historic treasures of California is the famous Consul Larkin House at Monterey," wrote Dr Robert J. Parker, when the California Historical Society published his "Chapters in the Early Life of Thomas Oliver Larkin," in 1939. The book includes Larkin's experiences in the Carolinas and the building of the Larkin House at Monterey.

Built as a residence and the place of business of young Thomas Oliver Larkin during the Mexican period, the adobe in 1843-44, when Larkin was appointed United States Consul, became the center not only for most part of the business life of the province but also for a great deal of the official life as well.

In the attractive old adobe many secret messages were received and exchanged. Lt A. H Gillespie brought confidential dispatches from Washington to Larkin and to Fremont, which he memorized and destroyed before entering Mexico. Immediately upon arrival in Monterey he went directly to the Larkin House to report to Consul Larkin.

After the raising of the Untied house. The present dining-room was used during Mr. Larkin's incumbency as consul to the "trading station." It was here that the commissary was maintained. It was also the exchange floor on which the cargoes of hides were exchanged by the Californians for furniture, finished lumber, and various luxuries of civilization with which the clipper ships weathered the Horn. The broad pine flooring, worn by many steps." States flag at the Custom House in 1849, the Larkin House was used as headquarters of Gen. Kearney and his adjutant-general Lt. Sherman Later, after the arrival of Col. Mason, the American base was moved to El Cuartel.

In the February 1933 issue of House Beautiful there appeared an article written by Knowlton Mixer entitled "The Monterey House." He wrote: "The Larkin House ... was divided by a hall containing the staircase to the second floor, flanked by two rooms on each side ... The living room ... opens on the garden .... Its present furniture is not that of Larkin's time, with the exception of a handsome desk which his granddaughter, Mrs. Alice Larkin Toulmin, has restored to the house.

In 1833 Larkin married the widowed Mrs. Rachel (Hobson) Holmes and began thinking about building a home in Monterey. From Larkin's accounts it is possible to secure definite information about building costs in Monterey during the Mexican period. Larkin kept account books in which he noted every detail of expense during the building of the Larkin House. These books are now part of the collection of "Larkin Papers" in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

During the latter days of 1834. Larkin selected a building site at the corner of Jefferson and Calle Principal, and began to assemble the needed material. It would be interesting to know where he resided in the meantime, but as far as we know that historical intermission in his life has not been recorded.