

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Vallejo's Speech

July 6, 1886 was a great day in Monterey when the 40th anniversary of the raising of the United States flag at the Custom House was celebrated. On July 6, 1957, the 111th observance of that historic day was reenacted under the auspices of the Monterey History and Art Assn., the Navy League, and the City of Monterey, assisted by the U.S. Navy and Army, whose participation was invaluable. July 7, 1846 was actually the date on which the flag was raised but falling on a Sunday in both years made the change necessary we presume.

We have just finished reading the speech made that day in 1886 by Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, which we think is a gem in the history of the Old Capital of 71 years ago. Therefore, today we are practically turning this diary over to the general and his speech. The editor of the Morning Call, San Francisco, of that date entitles the report of the general's talk: "General Vallejo, the veteran, makes an address bristling with pleasing recollections."

"Gen. Vallejo was next introduced to perform the ceremony of raising the Spanish and Mexican flags. The general had been a continuous resident of Monterey under the several flags of Spain, Mexico and the United States, and was Mexican military governor in 1835. The general's appearance on the platform was a signal for wild applause. The old gentleman took off his hat and bowing profusely, delivered the address, frequently interrupted by cheers. The general's native tongue is Spanish, and the marked accent gave a rich flavor to the humor of his address, and he kept the audience continually convulsed with mirth," the reporter of that day wrote for his paper.

"I was born here," he said. "In this town on the morning of July 7, 1808. I have lived here ever since, I was born here under the shade of the Spanish flag. Then the Mexicans came here and said they owned the country, and I became a Mexican. Then the Yankees came here, and I became a Yankee. I like the Yankees." Here the general paused and kissed his hand chivalrously to a young lady in the audience. "That's a niece of mine," he explained to the audience. "She is like a star in the heavens, she is. I can remember when Monterey threw off Spanish rule and took up Mexico for a guardian. About 25 years afterwards the Yankee folks came

around and we heard they were playing Cain down at Palo Alto and all that. Finally, Com. Sloat sailed in here one day and said that the United States owned Monterey. Well, he was right. But before he came there was a good deal of talk about declaring ourselves for the United States. Some also wanted to hoist the French flag.

"Some folks came to me about it, but I told them I would be hanged a hundred times before I would do it. . . . But the commodore did it for us. I came here to represent the three epochs - Spanish, Mexican and American. I was born a Spaniard, but I became a Mexican and an American without taking any oath of allegiance. The Yankees are very enterprising people and they have conducted business in a good rushing way. They have been so enterprising that sometimes I fear that they will get a hook and pull down the moon and sell it for green cheese.

"People often ask me when I first landed in Monterey. I tell them that I landed on this rocky coast on July 7, 1806, about 4 o'clock in the morning. They then look surprised. A great opera singer once asked me, General, tell me about some of the early singers who held concerts in this country. I told her that the first concert I ever remembered hearing was along about 1818, about 60 years ago. It was held right over there on that hill. They sang there all night and they were about as loud a pack of singing coyotes that I ever heard. But they have all gone now. I should like to hear them again."

Concluding, General Vallejo seized the pulley rope, and amid a chorus of cheers and an international salute from the battery and from the Rush, raised the Spanish flag fluttering in the breeze, the Mexican flag, with a similar salute, was next raised.

Chas. F. Williams, captain of the Marines, Mare Island, then approached the identical pole upon which the first American flag was floated in California and drew up the star-spangled banner. A salute of 38 guns was fired.

The Declaration of Independence was read in a distinct voice by M. R. Merrill, a member of the Monterey Parlor of the Native Sons.

The proclamation issued by Com. Sloat and read upon the Custom House Steps in 1846 was read, from the original manuscript, which has been in the possession of the California Pioneers, by Lieut. J. B. Whittemore of the California Volunteers. Lieut. Whittemore is the eldest son of Rear Admiral Sloat's daughter.