

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'Monterey Memorial Issue'

The recent issue of the California Historical Society Quarterly could very easily be called a "Monterey Memorial Issue" for most of the articles pertain in one way or another to the history of this old Spanish Capital. The very first story is entitled "The American Consulate in California, Documents Relating to its Establishment" edited by Henry P. Beers, the second is "California Paintings" in the Louis Sloss Jr. collection of California paintings, edited by Jean Martin, in which seven out of the 27 paintings mentioned were painted by Monterey artists in the early 1900's.

"California Prior to Conquest, a Frenchman's Views," by William Finley Shepard is the third. Shepard tells of an event on June 11th, 1840 when the "inhabitants of the dusty little village of Monterey were surprised to learn that a French warship was entering the harbor."

An article on "Food Habits of 19th Century California Chinese," is included in the Quarterly. Robert F. G Spier is the author of this report which ends thusly: "Of the wide variety of marine life available in California waters, we find that at least the following were taken: salmon, sturgeon, smelt, flounders, sculpins, shrimp, abalone, crabs, and oysters. Anchovies were also caught, possibly only for bait. Seaweed was collected by members of the Monterey fishing colony before the turn of the century, if one may trust the evidence of contemporary photographs."

In the "The American Consulate In California" Beers explains that while he searched the file of Applications and Recommendations in the record of the Department of State in the National Archives for material relating to territories of the United States, he found several which antedated the actual commencement of the American consulate in Monterey, Upper California (Mexico), none of the former applicants had ever been appointed, he found. The American Consulate in Monterey was established with the appointment of Thomas Oliver Larkin as consul. Beers remarks that it is interesting to note that at the time Larkin undertook his duties as consul at Monterey, he had been a resident of this place for 12 years, and that the United States Government had sought unsuccessfully to station a consul here.

Larkin's actual services in that position ceased with the American occupation of California in June 1846, though the consulate was not formally terminated until May 30 1848, when the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was ratified. In the interval and until November 1848, he rendered confidential reports to the Secretary of State on conditions in California. A volume of his dispatches to that official, 1844-1848, is in the records of the Department of State on conditions in California. These records are available on micro-film. There are also many documents and communications relating to the consulate in Monterey in the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley, many of which are contained in "The Larkin Papers." being published occasionally by the library.

While in Monterey Captain de Rosamel, of the French ship "Danaide," which visited here in 1840, performed a valuable service for the student of California history, in the belief of Shepard. He gathered important data on California affairs and assembled these, together with his opinions, in the report reproduced. Particularly enlightening are his views on the secularization of the missions and on political and economic conditions in California.