

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 10, 1958

The First Emigration

We were recently presented with an edition of "The California Scrap-Book, a Repository of Useful Information and Select Reading," compiled by Oscar T. Shuck, published by H. H. Bancroft A Co., San Francisco, 1889. The donor was Mrs. William C. Bogen an old-time friend from San Jose, who came with her late husband to make a home on the Monterey Peninsula in the early 1920s. Her Country Club home has been purchased by Cmdr. Richard McClellan, U.S.N., and Mrs. McClellan, recently returned from Turkey. Mrs. Bogen plans to make her home in San Francisco.

In the preface of the old book the gleanings for his personal scrap-book, the compiler has exercised great care, giving the date, and authority in all cases when known; and in preparing the work for the public, he has at every step been influenced by one motive - a determination to make the volume a valuable work of reference to professional and literary men, and an acceptable companion in the family circle, not only in California, but wherever it may find its way."

One article we came across in this California Scrapbook was titled "The Pioneer Overlanders of 1841." It was first printed in the San Francisco Bulletin, July 27, 1868, and mentions Monterey a number of times as the names of early settlements are listed and discussed.

The article opens thusly: "A correspondent sends us a list of the first regular emigration to California in 1841, and we are assured it is the fullest which has yet appeared in print. This enterprise occasioned at the time much excitement on the Missouri frontiers, and accounts of it were published in several of the western journals, as it was then considered a great undertaking to cross the Rocky Mountains and explore a new road through the snow ranges and howling deserts south of the Columbia, the only well-ascertained points being the Great Salt Lake, and the mythical St-Mary's now Humboldt, so called afterward by Fremont. An interesting sketch of this 1841 adventure appeared a few months after in Chamber's Edinburgh Magazine, which seems to have been written by someone well acquainted with all the particulars, and who foretold the effects on the future prospects of California."

Our correspondent says: "I have just received the following information from Albert G. Toomes, now of Tehama, who formerly lived in Monterey, and is well known in that town, where he resided from 1842 to 1851.

"I sat down with my old partner Thomas a few days ago and got talking of old times in California. It occurred to us to make a list of our ancient companions in the hard journey we made from Independence, a long 27 years ago, and, Sandy, our hairs are getting gray, and we often remember those blessed days, old "bailies (?) and merienders' in Monterey. I claim that we were the first regular emigrants who ever started from the States to California, as those who arrived in the country before us, dropped in by mere chance, as old trappers, whalemens, and sailors from the islands and Boston ships. Our party was divided into two companies, who left Independence on the 6th day of May 1841, and we got into California on the 10th of November 1841. The first company was headed by Robert H. Thomes, who crossed over by the way of Salt Lake, and the second was headed by William Workman, who went by the way of Santa Fe and the middle route to Los Angeles; both got into the country at nearly the same time."

The reporter goes on to tell in further detail of California: "We were all armed with rifles, and mounted on horseback, and had literally to smell our way every day of that long, hard journey of 176 days; but we arrived all safe and hearty, and nearly everyone of the immigrants mentioned have either died in the State or still reside here. But I never want to cross those hard deserts and big mountains again except by railroad, and you bet I shall run over to old Pike on the 4th of July 1870 - car, or maybe on those of 1869, as I hate salt water sailing.

"The Indians, once so numerous, are all gone, and the rail cars will soon rush by our doors, and the land is worth \$20 an acre. That house we built in Monterey for Governor Jim eno, in 1845, was one of the best jobs we ever did in our lives, for the old gentleman paid us well, but we got our farms without any of the trouble others had."