

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'Pioneers of 1841'

A correspondent of the San Francisco Bulletin sent in a list of "Pioneers of 1841" to be published on July 27, 1868, naming the men who were the first regular emigrants to California and assuring the readers that the list is the fullest which had yet appeared in print.

At Monterey he lists Thomas Oliver Larkin, David Spence, John B. R. Cooper, James Watson, William E. P. Hartnell, George Kinlock and wife, George Allen, James Stokes, William Watts, Earnest Romio from Germany, William Foxson, Mr. McVicker, William E. Garney, James Meadows and James McKinley.

In Santa Cruz the list includes Isaac Graham, Henry Nail, Job F. Dye, formerly of Monterey (now of Idaho), William G. Chard, Jacob Majors, Peter Lassen, John Sinclair, Mr. Dickey, and "several others I have now forgotten."

"Pioneer companies of the Overland route of the Mary's, Ogden, or Humboldt rivers, in 1841: In company No. 1 - Robert H. Thomes, now of Tehama; Mr. Bartlett, Joseph Childs, Maj. Rickman, Talbot H. Greene, Joseph Belden of San Jose. Charles Webber, founder of the City of Stockton; Henry Hubert, John Bidwell of Chico, Charles Flugge, Benjamin Kelsey, Andrew Kelsey, Mr. Kelsey, all of Sonoma, James Littlejohn, and others. The correspondent declares: "We suffered' great hardships and got into very tight pinches for food and water, but we made up for it when we got among the fat beef and venison in California."

"When I arrived in California," the self-made reporter wrote, "I found living in different parts of the country the following American and foreign settlers (1841):

"In Los Angeles - John Temple, Abel Sternes, William Carpenter, Richard Lochlin, MR. Vignes, William Wolfskill, John. J. Warner, Mr. Williams, and Stewart and Sam, two American colored men; and really it was a good thing to see a darkey more as in old Missouri"

"At Sonoma and the Bay were - Jacob P. Leese, also formerly of Monterey; Victor Prudham and George Yount of Napa. W. D. M. Howard and Joseph P. Thompson of San Francisco, I believe were after my arrival one or two years. Besides these, were W. A. Richardson of Sausalito, John Gilroy and David

Littlejohn, who had lived in the country many years, and our well known, old friend, Capt. John A. Sutter.

"This entertaining story we have just read in the "California Scrap Book," compiled by Oscar T. Shuck, and published in 1869 by H. H. Bancroft & Company, San Francisco.

It seems there was located then, in the vicinity of Santa Barbara, the original California mint. The Indians of Tulare County generally went over to Santa Barbara once a year in bands of 20 or 30, male and female on foot, armed with bows and arrows. They brought over panoche, or thick sugar, made from what is now called honeydew and from the sweet Carisa cane, and put up into small oblong sacks, made of grass and swamp flags; also nut pipes and wild tobacco, pounded and mixed with lime. This preparation of native tobacco was called "pispewat," and was used by them for chewing. These articles were exchanged for a species of money from the Indian mint of the Santa Barbara rancherias, called by them "ponga." This "ponga" money consisted of pieces of shell, rounded, with a hole in the middle, made from the hardest part of the small edible, white mussel of our beaches, which was brought in canoes by the barbarians from the island of Santa Rosa. The worth of the rial was put on a string which passed twice and a half around the hand - from the end of the middle finger to the wrist. Eight of these strings passed for the value of a silver dollar, and the Indians always preferred them to silver, even as late as 1833. This traffic the Padres encouraged, as it brought them into peaceable connection with the tribes of the Tulare Valley.

A longer article of this early day history appeared in the Santa Barbara Gazette in Sept 1860.