

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Historic Gold Dust Shipment

One hundred and eleven years ago this month there were many interesting and exciting historical events taking place in California. The shipping trade was in its heyday. The U.S.S. Lexington arrived in Monterey on Nov. 5th preparatory to returning to the United States. The Southampton, slower than the Lexington, was also in port. They both left Monterey at the same time but the Southampton failed to make port in San Francisco and was apparently delayed outside the Golden Gate by fog. In the absence of pilots aboard familiar with the bay entrance, she was likely to remain at sea until the fog cleared, according to newspaper reports of that day.

While in San Francisco, the Lexington took aboard gold dust for the United States. It is understood that merchants and others had, prepared large quantities for shipment aboard her, for she took \$50,000 on at Monterey.

On Nov. 29th, 1848 it was reported that the U.S.S. Lexington had sailed from San Francisco the day before with at least half a million dollars secured in her hold. She was bound for the United States. The gold was owned and shipped by private owners taking advantage of the Navy's offer to freight it safely at low rates. The naval storehouse was bound for New York by way of Valparaiso and Rio de Janeiro.

Postal rates were established Nov. 5, 1848 for the United States mail service to be established in California. They were set by the post office department. From here to the Atlantic coast each single letter, not over half an ounce in weight, was to cost 40 cents. The rate was set at 12 ½ cents between any places on the Pacific coast.

A Masonic Lodge was chartered for California Nov. 8, 1848, by the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. The charter was granted to Levi Stowell, William Van Voorhies and B. F. McDonald to establish, the lodge upon their arrival in California. Mr. Van Voorhies had been named postmaster agent for this territory a short time before.

Under a Monterey dateline on Nov 15, 1848, it was announced that a license to fly the United States flag on the brigantine El Placer had been issued by Lieut. Henry

W. Halleck, secretary of state, to Charles Walters, an old California resident.

The vessel was the former Manuel Adolfo which was captured by the U. S. S. Cyane in the recent war and sold at auction at La Paz. El Placer was a 60-ton, copper bottomed vessel and was declared to be a welcome addition to the coasting trade.

The California Star resumed publication in San Francisco Nov. 19, 1848, as the California Star and the Californian, the territory's first newspaper. Editor and proprietor of the newspaper was Edward C. Kemble, formerly associated with Sam Brannan in the publication of the Star.

Both newspapers had ceased publication five months previous in the early rush to the gold fields. The Californian resumed publication two months before being absorbed by the Star.

August 15, 1846, The Californian, first newspaper published, owned by Robert Semple and Walter Colton, made its initial appearance as a weekly in Monterey.