

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **The Presidio's Beginning**

Today we will continue with the history of the Old Presidio of Monterey as revived in 1937 by Maj. C. H. Gerhardt of the 11th cavalry, stationed at the Presidio, for the late Col. Roger S. Fitch (USA-ret) then president of the Monterey History and Art Assn. The original of this historic review is in the writer's files, a gift from Col. Fitch to the Monterey History and Art Assn.

Fort Mervine, situated on the brow on the hill above Pacific street and on which there is an historic marker placed there by the Monterey History and Art Assn, was named for Capt. William Mervine, USN. The fort was started in 1848 by the Navy under Ensign Baldwin, on the next level above El Castillo. It was completed by Lt. H. W. Halleck, C. E., Lt. E.O.C. Ord. and Lt. W. T. Sherman, using Company "F," 3rd Artillery and some New York Volunteers. The fort consisted of earthworks and a blockhouse and was armed by guns brought in the "Lexington" from the East Coast. It was dismantled in 1852. Most if not all equipment was sent to Benicia. Some field pieces were retrieved by Col. Fitch and may be seen at the fort today.

Lts. Halleck, Ord, and Sherman, mentioned above, all are well known historically in Monterey as well as elsewhere in the United States.

The Sherman Halleck headquarters, next to the Larkin House on Calle Principal is at present being restored by the State Division of Beaches and Parks. The little adobe building is a portion of the property recently donated to the State of California by Larkin's granddaughter. Mrs. Alice Larkin Toulmin.

At the present time Halleck is being recognized as the builder of the old Montgomery Block in San Francisco which is to be torn down to make way for progress. If you, our readers, wish to learn more about this gentleman and the great building he constructed in our neighboring city read "The Ark of Empire" by Idwell Jones. It is a fascinating story of California's early days and the interesting account of the construction of a great building in a "small city." Halleck later became secretary of state in California during Gov. Riley's military rule and was a prominent general during the Civil War. In the early 1850s he was a prominent lawyer in San Francisco.

Fort Ord is named for Gen. E. O. C. Ord, about whom we will write in a succeeding column. Lt. W. T. Sherman certainly made a name for himself in Monterey. We have a fascinating love story still existing here, there is a street named for him and seldom a day passes in which his name is not mentioned by someone.

Commodore R. S. Stockton succeeded Commodore John Drake Sloat who sailed into Monterey Bay and ordered the Stars and Stripes unfurled at the Old Custom House on July 7, 1846. In late July 1846, Capt. John C. Fremont, with 160 mounted men arrived overland and camped on the outskirts of Monterey.

Military governors of California were Gen. Stephen Watt Kearney: Col. R. B. Mason, under whom Lt. Sherman served as adjutant general, and Sen. Bennett Riley, who organized the Constitutional Convention of Sept. 1, 1849 and general election before recognition of California as a state by Congress.

Fort Mervine was re-occupied during the Civil War, log huts being built for two companies of infantry. At the close of the war, troops were withdrawn, and a caretaker (Sgt. Doud) left in charge. The building disappeared.

An executive order in 1868 allotted 158 acres to the reservation, however, through a survey error only 140 acres were claimed.

In 1902, with many troops returning from the Philippine Islands, the reservation was re-occupied, and Capt. E. H. Plummer began construction of the present post.

Purchase of additional land in 1903 and 1906 increased the reservation to its present size of 398 acres.

The Gigling area of 15,809 was bought in 1917, the original owners (heirs of David Jacks) retaining timber rights. The United States later purchased these rights for \$25,000. Other acreage has been added to Fort Ord since the date in 1938 when the above report was made to Col. Troup Miller, commanding the 11th Cavalry.