

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 29, 1959

Thomas Meadows

Another old settler has passed from our midst but the memory of him will linger on for years to come. Thomas Charles Meadows was born in the Carmel Valley and made his home there until a couple of years ago when he went to San Francisco to live with a son. He died there last week, and his body was returned to Monterey to rest beside other members of the Meadows family in the ancient Catholic cemetery near El Estero.

Thomas Meadows was the descendent of James and Loreta Meadows. The name Meadows has been known since the early 1830's in the Valley, but the name Onesemo, which was Loreta's family name, is much older. Loreta was one of the Room-se-en Indians who made their home there for unknown years. These two kindly people were the grandparents of Thomas Meadows.

The father, James Meadows was born in England. At an early age he left his native land to seek his fortune in California, arriving in Monterey aboard a whaling vessel about 1837. His wife, Loreta Onesemo Meadows, is the charming, appealing leading character in Anne Bensen Fisher's "Cathedral in the Sun." It is in this historical novel that the Mission is so beautifully described.

This gentle Indian woman is buried in the Monterey Catholic cemetery where a simple stone marks her grave. Her father, Juan Onesemo, helped to build the Carmel Mission and continued to care for it until his death.

Another distinguished member of this family was Miss Isabella Meadows who was born July 7, 1846, the day the United States flag was first flown at the Custom House in Monterey. Mrs. Fisher describes Miss Meadows as "A great lady in every sense of the word; she had dignity and poise, and her clear brown eyes reflected inner peace and a workable philosophy of life."

Down through the years Miss Meadows had carried in her keen mind intimate details of life at the Mission during her grandfather's day; things her mother knew and heard, and in time passed on to her daughter.

Finally, the gracious lady was taken to Washington, D.C., by scientists who discovered her to be a clever linguist and the last of the Carmel Valley Indians to speak the

Room-se-en language. They took her (so Mrs. Fisher relates) tortilla pans, dried herbs and all, by automobile to our National Capital, where she spent several years, vitally interested in her new work, started at the age of 89. When she died, final services for her were held in Carmel Mission. She did not wake from sleep one night in Washington, at the age of 94. She rests in the Catholic cemetery in Monterey, her sponsors having returned her body to her native country.

Thomas Charles Meadows was a retired farmer living for many years in a small brown cottage, neighboring the late Louis Wolter's Hacienda in the Carmel Valley. Most any time of day one could see the kindly old gentleman walking slowly across the field of yellow pumpkins or tall, sweet com to have a visit with his friend and neighbor. We shall miss him.

On June 3, 1956 Mr. Meadows attended Monterey's birthday Merienda with his nephew, Walter Collinson to honor his grandniece, Miss Gay Collison, daughter of the Walter Collisons', who had been chosen as La Favorita for that year. Miss Collison became Mrs. John Charles Faliano and now resides in San Francisco.