

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 12, 1959

Monterey's First Depot

It gives one a sad feeling to see another of Monterey's old buildings disappear from the landscape.

We shall miss the story-and-a-half brown building as we travel day by day down Pacific street. It is being demolished to make way for a city parking lot. We are not being critical of the city for we know the destruction was inevitable but it means another link with the past has been broken for progress and so we will give our last report on the history of the landmark at 434 Pacific St.

That old frame house was Monterey's first railroad depot. It was built by Carl Abbott when he built the narrow-gauge railroad into Monterey from Salinas in 1874. After the little railway went broke or was sold to the Southern Pacific, Joaquin Serrano who was the uncle of the present Serrano heirs, bought the property and had it moved to its present site, the narrow gauge railway was built in 1871. It was taken out of use in 1873-74. During the same period Abbott built the Abbott House in Salinas, now known as the Cominos Hotel.

A little hand book of Monterey published in 1875 tells this story: "Whatever may be the fate of this road (narrow gauge) in the future, it will always be memorable in the commercial history of California as the first narrow gauge railroad built in the state; add also as a road by the people for the people, to contend with a great and powerful monopoly, and save the grain-growers of the district no less than \$200,000 a year."

It is interesting to note the story of the locomotives, "C. S. Abbott," and "Monterey," purchased from the Baldwin Locomotive Co., Philadelphia, Pa. The cars, which were declared to be superior in every respect, were built in Monterey by Thomas Carter.

Although the road was a narrow gauge, only three feet between the rails, the cars were so "designed that the passengers hardly realized any difference from those of the broad gauge and had ample room and accommodation."

The railroad commenced running Oct 28, 1874, too late to carry much of the grain from the valley; but its early completion had been a fixed fact in August, thereby

compelling the S.P.R.R. to make a reduction from \$5.50 per ton to \$4.25 freight on grain to San Francisco. The Monterey Salinas Valley Railroad carried about 5,000 tons in 1874; loaded the M.L. Richardson at Monterey (2,400 long tons).

The freight on merchandise from San Francisco to Salinas City was \$7.20; the S.P.R.R. reduced to \$6. Salinas was supplied with redwood lumber from Watsonville and pine from San Francisco; now there were two markets open, and redwood comes to Monterey as cheap as to San Francisco, and only has to be freighted 20 miles instead of 120.

The number of stockholders in the old railroad was 72, principally landowners and farmers, namely: David Jacks, C. S. Abbott, A. & M. Gonzales, Robert McKee, the Munras family, A. Watson, Francis Doud, p. Zabala, Jessie D. Carr, James Bardin, John Abbott, J. B. S. Cooper, C. Laird, Charles McFadden, Malarin, George Pomeroy, Judson Parson, William Quintal, William Robson, F. S. Spring, Charles Underwood and William Ford, according to the listing in the Hank Book of Monterey.