

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Captain Du Pont's Journal**

We have before us an intriguing historical comment on the life and work of Captain S. F. Du Pont, including extracts from private journal letters of the Captain written while in command, of the *Cyane*, during the war with Mexico, 1846-1848. These extracts were privately printed by his family in 1885, in 444 pages, 8 volumes, and advertised recently for \$200.00 for the .set. We mention the price for the reason collectors of Californiana and Americana have a real, worthwhile investment in books and manuscripts. These Du Pont books are newly discovered and are a highly important source for the conquest of California.

An edition of fewer than 50 copies were printed, type distributed, and no copies offered for sale. Although the work contains a rich mass of first-hand source material on the conquest of California, it has remained virtually unknown and entirely unused to this day. The Union Catalogue has a record of but one single copy in the Delaware Historical Society. Unknown to Bancroft, Winslow, Larned, Haferkorn, Hanna, Royce, Cowan, etc.

Captain Du Pont (later Rear Admiral) was one of the most prominent and active leaders in the conquest of California; and besides recording his own noteworthy achievements, his journals and letters show him to have been in almost constant contact with Fremont, Stockton, Sloat, Kearney, Larkin, Biddle, Shubrick, LaVallete, Gillispie, Jones, and Mason, whose movements throughout the conquest are meticulously narrated by Du Pont as they came under his notice. The narrative is unusually full in essential detail and evenly told whether the subject be affairs at Monterey, San Jose, Yerba Buena or the inland fighting.

Du Pont sailed from Norfolk in October 1845 as a commander of the Frigate *Congress*, flagship of Commodore Stockton. He arrived in San Francisco about July 1, 1846, The Mexican War was in progress, and Stockton proceeded to Monterey where he took charge of the naval forces in the Pacific and places Du Pont in command of the sloop of war *Cyane*. The author then took on board *Fremont* and his Battalion and landed them shortly afterward at San Diego. Proceeding hence down the coast, he reached San Blas where, as on numerous occasions, his crew substituted for

marines and his landing party spiked the guns of the Mexicans.

Entering the Gulf of California, he seized La Paz and at Guaymas burned the Mexican fleet. Within a few months he cleared the Gulf of hostile ships, destroying or capturing some thirty-odd.

November 1847, he aided Commodore Shubrick (who had succeeded Stockton) in the occupation of Mazatlan. Later when the enemy attempted to recapture its lost possessions, Du Pont led his "troops" to the rescue of the besieged and defeated American forces at the Mission of San Jose. Subsequently he organized and led various similar inland expeditions and succeeded in clearing the country of hostile troops.

On his return to Norfolk in October 1848, Du Pont was publicly congratulated by the Secretary of the Navy on his "safe return after a long cruise, in which the services of the officers and crew of the *Cyane* were so highly distinguished for gallantry, efficiency, and skill."

In a small booklet entitled "San Francisco Street Names" edited by Henry C. Carlisle and published by the American Trust Company, we found this reference to Capt. Samuel F. Du Pont: DuPont street now - Grant Avenue: U.S. officer during conquest of California

In command of the U.S.S. *Congress*, which brought Commodore Robert F. Stockton to California in July 1846. Transferred to the U.S. *Cyane*, Du Pont during the next several months took an active part in the conquest of California, transferring troops from port to port. The name of the southern end of the street was changed to Grant Avenue in the late 70's and 80's. The name Du Pont for the north end of the street persisted until a much later date.