

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 28, 1959

### **Gateway To Gold Fields**

"Monterey, Sept 22, 1848 – The long contemplated trip of the Rev. Walter Colton, alcalde of Monterey, to the gold mines was almost ended yesterday before it began." so says a report of the California news development datelined 110 years ago today

In preparation for the journey the alcalde had two horses put in the government corral for safekeeping. But when the time came to start it was discovered a party of volunteers had broken in during the night and made off with the horses.

Alcalde Colton hastily bought another horse for \$100 to be able to start off with his companions, Capt. William Marcy and two other gentlemen. A wagon with four mules had gone on ahead with a teamster with provisions, articles of trade with the Indians, gold mining utensils and blankets.

The party plans to travel by way of San Juan Bautista, San Jose and then across to the San Joaquin Valley. Though it was primarily an observation trip for him the alcalde intended to do a bit of digging for gold to see what it is like, and perhaps come back with a few pounds of the rich dust.

"San Francisco Sep. 22, 1948 - A new day is marked in the progress of the town as the shipping and commercial gateway to the gold fields.

The Brig Belfast today became the first vessel of any size to land here without the aid of a lighter This was made possible by the opening of the wharf built by William S. Clark and jutting out into the bay at Clark's Point at the foot of Broadway.

Though the wharf is not yet entirely completed, the Belfast has the honor of being the first ship to dock to unload a cargo of merchandise from the Atlantic Coast. The brig, Dewitt and Harrison owners, is 163 days out of New York."

In her hold was a large assortment of general goods brought out by her owners to sell at wholesale. Included in the cargo were 1,000 pounds consigned to Dr. Fourgeaud's Drug Store on Portsmouth Square. Epsom salts, opium, laudanum, castor oil and other drugs and perfumery, also ribbons, silk, cashmere shawls. ladies' shoes, boots, clothing, etc. to R. Wells & Co.

With the Belfast arrival and demonstration of the wharfs value, the price of goods dropped by 25 per cent. A nearby vacant lot at Montgomery and Washington Streets, which had been offered previously at \$5,000, and no buyer, drew a ready bid of \$10,000. As a result, merchants were predicting that San Francisco was about to enter upon a new and more important era as chief port of California.

"Hereto, no large ships have been able to dock directly. Even smaller ones could land at low tide only at the rocks at Clark's Point because the mud flats prevent such landings at low water along the Embarcadero south of Rincon Point. Now, plans are being freely talked of for other wharfs.

"Because there are in this vicinity no trees other than scrub or live oak, which is not suitable for cutting into piles redwood trees were felled on the north side of the bay and floated to the wharf site. It was also necessary to devise and build a pile driver because no such machinery was available. It was built out of lumber and pig-iron ballast was bought from a whaling ship to make a hammer. Several pigs were bound together to form a hammer weighing 1,200 pounds."

"At the present time the wharf extends out into the bay for 150 feet, and thus permits the docking of practically any vessel arriving at San Francisco."