

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 5, 1960

### **First Brick House**

In February of 1907, Edward A. Sherman sent a communication to the Monterey Cypress recording a biographical sketch of G. D. Dickenson, the builder of the First Brick House In Monterey. The clipping was found by Mrs. Millie Birks among her possessions a few years ago and loaned to the Diary for this column.

G. D. Dickenson, an old pioneer, was born in Virginia in 1808; he was left an orphan at an early age and was tutored by an uncle. He left Virginia in 1822 and emigrated to Rutherford County, Tennessee, in 1822, where he married Isabella McCreary in 1828. in 1832 he went to Jackson, Mo., and lived there 14 years, being one of the earliest pioneers of that county.

In May of 1846, with his wife and six children, he left for the then almost unknown California and arrived at Sutter's Fort in November. They had had a perilous journey, but they had successfully pushed through the very storm that caught the Reed and Donner party. The first winter in this state he passed in Santa Clara. While there he and his two sons were forced to take part in the war until the treaty with Mexico was concluded in 1848.

It was in June of 1847, that the family arrived in Monterey and resided here 18 months, burnt the first brick kiln and built the first brick house ever to be constructed in the State of California. In June 1848 he went to Hangtown and other mining points, wintered at Mokelumne Hill, and was discoverer of the noted gulch that bears his name.

In April 1849 Dickenson located in Stockton, when there was neither a wooden nor a brick building in town. In August of that year he attended the first Constitutional Convention that met in Monterey in September, 1849, and soon after the adjournment of that body he was elected prefect of the San Joaquin district and served as such until the State government was organized on December 20, 1849, at San Jose, when the Mexican laws ceased to be in effect. His death occurred on October 25th, 1870.

In the January 1950 issue of "Notes" from the California Historical Society, the editor wrote this item concerning the First Brick House:

"One gift that cannot be omitted from mention in these pages came to us from Harry J. Breen, a descendant of Patrick Breen, member of the Donner party. Mr. Breen came into the Society headquarters in San Francisco bearing three documents pertaining to the sale in 1851 to Patrick Breen of 60,000 bricks and also one lot with all the improvements thereon in Monterey."

The Improvements thereon included the old Gallant Duncan Dickenson house, and the bricks were part of those from which Dickenson had built his house in Monterey in 1847, it being the first brick house in California. A part of the sale was also "one lot or parcel of land 22 varas by 40 extending to the rear of Vives Schultz and Co., sold for \$66. The brick house, together with its lot, was sold for \$1,025."

The Schultz store was on Olivier street. This street was named for Olivier Deleisseques, a Frenchman of some education who came to Monterey before 1850 and married Conception Boronda. Their home was an adobe building facing the street named in his honor.

In spite of many disturbances, Monterey prospered under Gringo rule. The Alcalde's accounts show that from December, 1846, to June 1848, there were 12 dry goods stores each, paying a license fee of \$1 per month.

March 31, 1848, a brick kiln lot, 90 yards long, was sold to George D. Dickenson for \$29. Assisted his son-in-law, A. G. Lawrie, a brick mason who molded and fired the bricks as well as laid them, he immediately began preparation of brick to build a mansion. Only one wing was ever completed, for the builders hastened away to the gold fields, leaving the first brick house in California unfinished.

The First Brick House is now the home of Mrs. Juan Garcia. Originally the house had six rooms - 3 on each floor, the lower 3 dirt floored.