

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 1, 1960

Sloat Landing

The 114th anniversary of the raising of the United States Flag at the Custom House on July 7, 1846, will be "observed" this year at an annual re-enactment sponsored by the Monterey History and Art Assn., the Navy League and the City of Monterey at the old Custom House. It will be a truly patriotic and historic event. Allen Knight, president of the History and Art Assn, and a member of the Navy League, is planning the event.

Although the raising of the Stars and Stripes at Monterey on July 7, 1846, marked the largest conquest ever executed by forces of the United States, the event probably has received less recognition than countless minor league historical acts.

In fact, the dramatic seizure of California by Commodore John Drake Sloat has received widespread recognition in memorial services only 11 times in the past in Monterey - in 1886, 1896, 1905, 1936, 1946, 1954, 1955 and on to this, 1960.

In 1946 the celebration was the greatest because of the 100th anniversary. It was in 1886 that a group of California citizens first banded together to do honor to Commodore Sloat - with the added motive of calling attention to a more personal project.

That year the Associated Veterans of the Spanish War of California were attempting to pass through Congress a general service pension bill and they used a celebration at Monterey, so the newspaper reporter of that date told us, to recall to the country one of the most important outcomes of the war in which they fought.

The bill was passed, giving veterans of 62 years of age or over a pension of \$8 a month.

The celebration also brought forth a fine and gallant gentleman, "Gen. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who 40 years before had been held captive by the Americans and who had surrendered the vast western empire to them."

Vallejo was called upon to raise the American Flag over the Custom House for this observance of the fall of his government, Mexico, four decades before. He did so with these words: "This flag will float here forever."

A Monterey paper of that date had this to say of the grand old man: "Gen. Vallejo's conduct in burning his uniform and shaving his beard hardly needs explanation. He had fought for his country, Mexico, and lost. He had not heart to keep about him the relics of his past glory. Even his beautiful place at Sonoma is named Lacrymae Montes (Tears of the Mountain). But the grand old man adopted the patriotism of his conquering foe and has since been one of the most useful and honored men of California.

Some of the events enacted at the celebration were a free Mexican picnic, exhibition drills by Navy units, a firemen's parade and tournament, band concerts and street dancing in the evening and literary exercises at the Custom House.

July 7 began with a grand march of "civic societies and all patriotic people," down Alvarado street and up to the site of the Sloat monument, a program which will again be carried out this year. Another parade in the afternoon of 1886, down Del Monte avenue ended at the Custom House where the flag was raised again. There was a wild west show in Lyceum Park in the evening.