

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **The Sloat Statue**

The 1886 celebration of the anniversary of the raising of the American Flag at the Old Custom House also led to the formation of the Sloat Monument Assn of California, a militant group dedicated to the purpose of erecting a monument to Commodore Sloat near the place where his forces first raised the Flag of the United States over California.

That movement was born in 1896, when "the semi-centennial celebration was highlighted by the laying of the monument's cornerstone, as well as the re-enactment of the raising of the flag at the Custom House.

Although the proponents of the plan had been trying to get state and federal aid for the project for several years, money for the monument came chiefly through private donations. The memorial was finally completed atop the Presidio bluff overlooking the old anchorage and unveiled at a ceremony June 14th, 1910. In 1956, the officials of the Presidio honored Sloat still further by placing a spot light which illuminates the monument each night.

In 1905 the Native Sons of the Golden West, with appropriate and well attended ceremonies, unveiled a plaque at the Custom House forever reminding the visitor of the historic event which took place there in 1846. The plaque is on the outside wall facing Alvarado street, where one often sees a tourist pause to read the inscription.

At the 1915 Celebration the late William Sandholdt, Monterey newspaper publisher, Joseph R. Knowland, congressman at that time, and the late Ross Sargent were the speakers. Mr. Knowland is now the publisher of the Oakland Tribune and retired chairman of the Division of Beaches and Parks Commission, and a part time resident of the Monterey Peninsula Country Club.

In 1936 the people of Monterey again joined together to pay homage to Sloat and to his contribution to the country's history. They enacted the first raising of the flag at the Custom House with the aid of the personnel from U.S. cruiser Minneapolis, then in the bay for the Fourth of July, celebration, and the 11th Cavalry units from the Presidio of Monterey, under command of Col. Troop Miller.

Watchword of that celebration, according to the files of The Herald of that, date, was: "if there had not been a Seventh there would have not been a Fourth."

Among, those mentioned on the program were Laura Bride Powers, curator of the Custom House; Carmel Martin, Monterey History and Art Assn.; Chief of Police Fred Moore; Mayor Walter Teaby; City Manager Bill Pardee; Capt. C. H. J. Keppler, commanding the Naval units and Col. Roger S. Fitch.

In the afternoon a portrait of William Toler, the man who actually raised the flag here in 1846, was dedicated in the Custom House Museum, with music by the WPA Tipica orchestra. The picture still hangs in the Custom House as does one of Commodore John Drake Sloat.

In 1946, the 100th anniversary of the flag raising event was doubly interesting and historic because the original site of the first flagpole had been discovered and a new pole of Monterey pine had been raised near the northeast corner, of the Custom House. There is also a bronze plaque embedded in stone at the foot of the pole placed there by the State Centennial Committee. The site was discovered by a group of young archaeologists from the University of California under the direction of Dr. Aubrey Neasham, historian for the Division of Beaches and Parks. It was at the (we might almost say at the insistence) of Mrs. Mary L. Greene, curator of the Custom House Museum, and the directors of the Monterey History and Art Assn., that the search was made by using a pen and ink drawing made in 1847 showing the pole where it is at the present time. The artist, William H. Hutton, made the drawing in 1847, from the hillside within the Presidio, or fort as it was then called.

Another celebration of the raising of the first United States Flag will be held on July 7, 1960, at the site of the first raising—the Old Custom House reservation.