

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 24, 1961

Architecture In Mexican Monterey

Mexican Monterey may be divided into two periods, architecturally. The first period, from 1822 to about 1835, had for its example that which had evolved in Spanish Monterey; and the second period, from 1835 to 1846, in turn utilized not only the architecture and materials already there, but those of New England, as well.

Dr. Aubrey Neasham, former state historian for the Division of Beaches and Parks, in an article written in 1938 explains that during the early part of Mexican Monterey, in the building of individual houses, many innovations came into being.

Having as examples the few houses of Spanish period built outside the Presidio - especially the Boronda, Armenta, Gonzaga, Rodriguez and Buelna - a district type of Monterey architecture evolved. Pitched roofs, balconies, enclosed patios in the rear, and individual houses of one or more rooms became the custom. The walled-in patio with surrounding rooms on three sides never became popular in Monterey.

Fireplaces built inside came into being in the 1820s. It is said that the first one to be built was that constructed in 1824 in the Munras home.

Other innovations came into being in the 1820s. William Hartnell was the first person in California to use wallpaper, which he put into his newly constructed house in 1825. Of that David Spence wrote to Hartnell June 2, 1825, as recorded in the Vallejo documents in the Bancroft Library:

"Since I put on the paper, I have a great many visitors from the Presidio and I would like you to return as soon as possible in case you should take off again for they do nothing but rub, rub with their hands, saying to one another 'Que es este-papel, no!'"

Hartnell was responsible also for a much greater use of lumber in Monterey. It was he who shipped lumber from Lima, Peru, in 1824. At that time according to his records, he shipped some lumber to Monterey, including 18 planks, 2 Inches by 18 feet, and 1,000 white oak hogsheads staves and 1,000 white oak pipe staves. By 1827, he was able to buy lumber in Monterey at \$90 per thousand feet.

A new trend in building began in Monterey in the 1830s, when a definite New England influence was added to the picture. With the building of Thomas O. Larkin's two-story house in 1835 came the real impetus, not only to that New England influence but to the development of the lumber industry, according to an article by R. J. Parker, "Building the Larkin House," published in the California Historical Quarterly which gives full details for that building. From that time on lumber took its place with adobe as an important building material in Monterey.

The records of the later Mexican period are very voluminous, thanks to the saving of the accounts of Larkin and others. It was Larkin who sold or controlled much of the building material in Monterey during the late 1830s and 1840s. Many of the buildings of Monterey for that period were either built for or built by him or were constructed with materials bought from him.

Lumber, as such, was of redwood or pine usually, with redwood gradually taking precedent over pine. The opening up of the great redwood areas near Santa Cruz in the 1830s, and in the regions about Carmel and the Sur to a lesser degree, was responsible for the increase of the redwood popularity. Most of the pine came from near Monterey, especially from Point Pinos. Besides Larkin, those who bought and sold lumber were William Hartnell, Nathan Spear, and Jose Abrego.

In Larkin's Papers and accounts he relates that several loads of redwood went as far as Hawaii in the 1840s.

Redwood and pine lumber were priced about the same at Monterey, according to scarcity, quality and size. In 1834, for instance, lumber cost as much as \$100 per 1,000 feet, and varied during the period 1834 to 1846 from \$40 to \$100 per 1,000. The usual cost of 'hewing was from \$1.50 to per 1,000, sawing from \$20 to \$60 per 1,000, (and hauling to Monterey as much as \$10 per 1,000.