

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Tales From Monterey Post Office**

Several years ago, the late Miss Edith Cox, former assistant postmaster at the Monterey Post Office, told us a delightful story of old Monterey, which we used then and are using again today for the amusement of our readers.

The first we will entitle "Julia and Frank, a tale of conjugal devotion." ... Julia was Irish and Frank was Italian, and neither could read nor write but the heart of Julia was centered upon her Frank, much to the annoyance of the folks at the early Monterey Post Office. They suffered when Frank went to the Springs at Tassajara for his rheumatism. In Julia's eyes, the clerks were responsible for the non-receipt of a letter being written by some kindly soul at the springs.

The stage ran only every other day but that was no excuse for not furnishing her a letter on demand. Every morning the clerk at the window would see Julia, as usual without a hat (we doubt if she owned one) but with a clean, white apron tied over her gingham one that had seen service about the fish sheds on the wharf.

Followed without fail this conversation:

Julia: "I want a letter from my husband."

Clerk: "There is no letter here."

Julia: "Why isn't there?"

Clerk: "Well perhaps he didn't write."

Julia, with growing suspicion: "Why didn't he write?"

Clerk: "Well perhaps he didn't feel like it."

Julia: "Do you think he is sick?"

Clerk: "No, I guess not but the stage did not come in today."

Julia, more suspiciously: "What day is today?"

Clerk: "This is Wednesday."

Julia, with an air of catching the clerk in a gross misstatement: "What day was yesterday?"

Clerk: "Yesterday was Tuesday."

Julia: "Tuesday!" (And now her air was one of utter disbelief, that of a person whose confidence was outraged.)

This sort of thing went on day after day, until the clerk was ready to shriek at the sight of Julia's stolid figure, about as pervious as a block of granite and with the air of one who is settled at that window for all times. But finally, there would come a card from Frank, with the news that he was all right, and that he wanted his flannel shirt.

The clerk would read Julia her card, a service she received in the same stolid manner, and then would take the card in to Charlotte at the bakery to have Sparolini's where Mr. Sparolini would stop his work and read it. Thus, having checked up on the various readings she would go home for the day.

When you consider that Frank spent two weeks at Tassajara and went there every year, you may realize how the whole postal force fervently hoped that Frank would get well. How awful to contemplate what would happen if Frank should die and the post office should still be responsible for news of his condition in whatever bourne he finally came to rest.

Well, Frank did finally die, and Julia, when next our informant saw her, had hennaed her hair, and wore red earrings and hat, and had taken up with a young man who had his eye join Frank's insurance.

Miss Cox ended her story with a twinkle in her eye: "You never can tell, can you?"