

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 24, 1961

Antique Bronze Anchor

It was on January 16, 1946 that the ancient bronze anchor which was hauled from the depths of Monterey bay several months before, was turned over to the Monterey History and Art Assn, to be placed on public exhibition at the north end of the Old Custom House reservation.

We were reminded of this ancient anchor as we read an account of the loss of three anchors by the Malaspina Exhibition which sailed into Monterey Bay in 1791 in two ships, "Descubierta" and the "Atrevida," and remained for 16 days. Several of these days were spent dragging the bay to retrieve the lost anchors without success. We wish we actually knew from what old Spanish galleon (15th to 17th century) or any other of the old time ships of navigators who visited Monterey in the very early days of explorations up the west coast of California, the anchor was dropped. But as yet all we know is that some vessel dropped it into the depths of Monterey Bay and it was accidentally fouled in the anchor of a visiting tanker and was drawn to the surface.

We remember, that it took two years after the anchor was pulled up from the waters of the bay before it was installed in the present setting near the entrance to the old wharf at the northerly end of the old Custom House, there was so much argument as to where it should be placed. First of all, it was dumped at the south end of the Custom House near the railroad tracks, then it found refuge in the corporation yard of the city. Much was written, much was said pro and con, about each location. Some even wanted it on old good dry land in front of Colton Hall. Statewide interest was aroused by the discussion and various people reported inquiries from visitors regarding the memento of Monterey's romantic past.

The anchor is, however, a rare and beautiful specimen of ancient craftsmanship, having been hand-forged from bronze, a metal which has not been used in fabrication of anchors for a century or more, according to the best available authorities. In proportions, it is both graceful and massive, and is amazingly well preserved after many decades immersion in the bay. Its weight is estimated at close to a ton, it is more than 8 feet long, nearly seven feet across the flutes, with

spades 19 inches long and a "bullring" 16 inches in diameter attached to the end of the shank.

Because it was found here and, in the very nature of things, is intimately associated with the nautical phases of local history, the anchor is a waterfront feature. Because the Old Custom House was the official headquarters for shipping activities in the day of "wooden ships and iron men" as well as a focal point of interest for Monterey history, that site seems to be the most appropriate for the permanent display of the anchor.

The Monterey History and Art Assn. sponsored the formal dedicatory ceremonies of the anchor at 2 o'clock on Sunday, April 28, 1946 at the Old Custom House. Manuel Campos and Los Rancheros entertained with music before the start of the program. Col. Roger S. Fitch delivered the opening Remarks and the late William M. O'Donnell, co-publisher of The Herald recited the history of the anchor and introduced Allen Knight, who assisted in getting the anchor ashore, Thomas Harper who represented Capt. A. P. Kurtz of Tide Oil No. 2 which brought the anchor up from the depths of the bay; Sal Colletto and crew of the Liberator who brought the bronze anchor ashore; H. L. Blaisdell, Dist. Supt., Division of Beaches and Parks; Chief Herman Korf, representing U.S. Coast Guard; Manuel Perry, superintendent of streets and his crew, who assisted greatly in placing the anchor.

Armin Hansen who drew the plan for the location of the anchor, "Myron Oliver for his artistic hand in the placement; Mrs. Mary Greene, curator of the Custom House; R. A. Wilson, then chief ranger at Point Lobos, who made the sturdy stanchion against which the anchor rests, and Francis Whitaker of Carmel who provided the wrought iron work, were all introduced and thanked for their work and interest.