

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Whaling In Monterey Bay

The whaling industry played a large and important part in the early history of Monterey. The Custom House records of this era, early 1860's, disclose the strangest entry in the annuals of the American whale fishery. This was the clearance of a vessel purportedly bound for whaling with a crew of one man, no doubt the busiest seaman in all maritime history. A story appearing in the May 5th, 1961 issue of the Vineyard Gazette, Martha's Vineyard, Mass., tells an interesting tale of whaling on the west coast which whetted our desire to repeat some of the information we have used in Peninsula Diary in the past. The Vineyard Gazette spoke of Capt. Lambert and his life in Monterey where he was prominent in whaling life as a deep-sea whaler, justice of the peace, notary public, agent for a steamship company and a lumbermill owner.

The Caroline E Foote was commonly known as the C E Foote, although officially entered at San Francisco she was owned in and hailed from Monterey. She became a familiar sight on the west coast. She was an active little boat of 145 tons which really got around and made a name for herself, not always savory. She is credited with the distinction of having imported a herd of smelly camels from De Castrias Bay in Asia for military service in the southwest desert. She transported early, but not "very desirable." immigrants to the Hawaiian Islands and once was seized for smuggling.

Under Capt. J P. Davenport's direction, she settled down to a life of hard work and respectability. She hunted the whale between the Golden Gate and Cape Lucas, Baja California. Her master was one of two Yankee deep-water whaling masters to have operated whaling stations on the shores of Monterey Bay. His competitor was Capt. Lambert, late of Martha's Vineyard, Mass. Both men had not been forgotten at Monterey as late as the 1930's by aging Portuguese whale men who had worked on the shore stations. Said one of them, "Davenport and Lambert were blue bellied Yankees, real deep sea whale men."

Davenport opened the first shore station in the fall of 1854. He gathered about him a company of twelve men, only three or four of whom were experienced whale men. A plant and try-works were set up near what was later known as the old wharf. Davenport had brought a

number of bombs from the east coast. Owing to some defect, they proved worthless. The company was obliged to resort to primitive methods of whale hunting.

In 1858 the "old" and the "new" companies were consolidated under the leadership of Capt. Lambert. Within the first few months of operation the consolidated Interests had landed \$31,000 worth of bone and oil on the beach at Monterey.

For 33 years Lambert was the government custodian of the Old Custom House and it was there that his wife and her niece, Mrs. Millie Birks, lived for many years. Mrs. Birks is now 93 years old and resides with her daughter-in-law and the latter's husband, Mr. and Mrs. Elnar L. Hansen on Boronda Lane in the Carmel Valley.

Mrs. Lambert was born in Ohio and came west with her husband. Her father, Peter H. Masters, an early-day jeweler in Monterey, joined them here. The couple sailed on many voyages but at last, tired of roaming around the world, they settled in Monterey where the ocean is a near neighbor and seafarers feel at home. Here Capt. Lambert became a justice of the peace and notary public. At the same time, he was agent for Goodall and Perkins in Monterey.

For 33 years Capt. Lambert was the government custodian of the Old Custom House, in Guinn's History of Monterey, I found this recording: "One of the most interesting men in Monterey (1903) is Capt. Thomas G Lambert, for years one of the most potent upbuilders of this beautiful town, but erstwhile a seasoned salt with many years of practical experiences upon the deep, and a whaling career of hundreds of members of the monster finny tribe; He was born on the island of Martha's Vineyard in 1826, and came of a family associated with that historic piece of land since 1662."