

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Monterey's First July 4

The city seal of Monterey was first used in 1850 for the Fourth of July celebration, the first observance of that national holiday after the Constitutional Convention held in Monterey at which the constitution was drafted and signed on Oct. 13/1849. The painting of the flag on which the seal appeared was done by Lt. Alfred Sully, who later became Gen. Sully. Sully also directed the ceremonies of the day 111 years ago. An old report of the event has this comment: "As the times were flush in Monterey in those days, everyone was brim full of patriotism, as you may suppose, and we all looked forward to a glorious career for old Monterey."

A correspondent to the old Alta, a newspaper published in San Francisco in the 1850's, printed the following article concerning the first July 4 celebration in Monterey,

"The procession assembled in the plaza across from the church, with the band of the 2nd Infantry at its head, proceeded by the famous banner which was carried by a character whose modesty would be put to blush to see himself in print, the celebrated Dennis McCarty, or 'the double breasted child of the forest,' as he called himself, who had gotten up for the occasion in leather breeches and top boots. There was also a mounted escort of young men wearing red 'bandas' or 'fajas' across the breast. It took up the march at the house of General Riley, who was waiting to receive it in full uniform, girded with the yellow sash won at Chapultepec. He was received with drums rolling and banners waving and took his place in the line which wended its way toward Colton Hall. The ceremonies there consisted in reading the Declaration of Independence by Capt. E. K. Kane of the Army, followed by a translation into Spanish by Lt. John Hamilton, an oration by John A. McDowell (brother of the general), and some remarks in Spanish by the Rev. Padre Ramirez, in his Dominican habit, with national airs from the band."

In another article of a later date, telling of the celebration in 1850 a correspondent wrote: "It was an unusually fine day, we were somewhat younger then and we were in high spirits and our hopes ran high. The festivities of the day as a matter of course, wound up

with a 'gran baile' at Colton Hall; the quadrille, the waltz, the contra danze and the jarabe."

After this description of the celebration of California's first Fourth of July the writer goes on to say: "It might not be out of place to mention that the Common Council voted General Riley, on the occasion of his departure from Monterey, a massive gold medal, with the city seal crudely fashioned and engraved. These civic dignitaries did not, however, get as far as their venerable compeers, the city fathers of the rival commercial emporium and City of San Francisco and vote themselves each a gold medal."

"But in spite of the rampart bull and the furious steed of the supporters and the imperative character of the motto 'Anda,' Monterey would not 'Andarrons' (go ahead); the young men's hair is now sprinkled with gray, their steps are not as springy and elastic as they were in those days, but the wind still sighs through the pines; the surf rattles and thunders on the beach, and to all appearances the old town of Monterey is still the same."