

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 19, 1962

First Theater Playbill

The earliest, theatrical performances in the First Theater in Monterey in February, 1850, brought out "standing room" only, crowds even standing outdoors to listen and enjoy, wrote E.L. Williams who had taken part in the first performance in the Jack Swan rooming house, turned theater. Williams was the Second Carrier in "The Story of Bardolph" which was presented on Monday evening, Feb. 11, 1850. Three years before that date the first performance there, "The Lion Son of '76", was given in the fall of 1847.

After reciting the life and work of several of the early players who were stationed at the Presidio of Monterey with Col. J.D. Stevenson's regiment of New York volunteers, Williams goes on to report on these men after they left Monterey.

Lt. Hamilton, while in charge of the battery in Florida, was ambuscaded by the enemy, his men being all killed. He was not killed in the encounter, but for years suffered much from the crippling wounds he received. He was promoted colonel of his regiment Feb. 20, 1864 for gallant and meritorious services in the battle of Olustee, Fla.

Lt. Alfred Sully, promoted to the rank of colonel, was, during the rebellion in command of Fort Sully (named for him) on the Yellowstone River, holding the Sioux Indians in check. He was afterward appointed to the command of the Northern Military Department of California, and on April 26, 1877, was at the Occidental Hotel, then on Montgomery street, San Francisco, on his way with his family to Fort Vancouver where he died the year afterward.

Lt. George Derby acquired fame in California as a great wag and humorist. He was known as "Squibob" and as the author of "Phoenixiana," a book containing his wittiest and best. About three years after his performance of "Bardolph" in Monterey he was ordered to New Orleans, where he sickened with a fever, became utterly blind and died within a year.

W.H. Chivers was a West Pointer and in Monterey, commissary's clerk not holding any rank in the service; he was afterward for many years until his death, clerk of the United States District Court in San Francisco.

The program for the opening evening on Feb. 11, 1850, is here presented:

UNION THEATER

Will be presented the Story of Bardolph, Dramatis Personae

Prince Hal, Lt. Hamilton; Falstaff, Lt. Sully; Poinis, Lt. McEwing; Bardolph, Lt. Derby; First Carrier, Lt. Moore; second Carrier, E.L. Williams; chamberlain, Lt. Jones; sheriff, Lt. Miler and Dame Quickly. W. H. Chivers. To be quickly followed by a dramatic Recitation by Lt. Hamilton: after which a comic song by Lt. Sully; after which a Melancholy by Lt. Derby and Mrs. Bouncer, Lt. Moore. Immediately after which the audience will retire to slow music. Doors open at half past 8 o'clock. Curtain rises at 7 o'clock precisely. Tickets delivered at the door. No postponement on account of weather .

During Alfred Sully's stay in Monterey, he met and fell in love and married the Spanish senorita Manuelita Jimeno, daughter of Don Augustias Jimeno and granddaughter of Don Jose de la Guerra of Santa Barbara. They were married in 1850, but that marriage did not last. In the Monterey mission cemetery, there is a marble tombstone marked thusly:

"To Dona Manuela Jimeno. Don Alfred Sully, Lt. U.S. Army dedicates this slate as a tribute, and perpetual memoir of her love and affection. Died 28 March 1851, Age 17 years and 5 months, and his son, Thomas Manuel Sully, who died 15 April 1851, at the age of one month."