

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'Someone Thought Of Louis'

The untimely death of Louis Adolfo Sanchez in Palo Alto recently brought to mind another bit of Monterey's old history of special interest. Sanchez was a nephew of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson, and a cousin of many residents of Old Monterey. He was born in Monterey, went to school in Colton Hall and took an active part in planning the annual reunion of former students held in the Constitution Hall on the upper floor of Colton Hall and sponsored by the city museum board.

He was the son of the late Adolfo Sanchez and his wife, Nellie van de Grift Sanchez, both early-day residents of this city. Mrs. Sanchez was the author of "Spanish and Indian Place Names of California," used as a reference book since its publication in 1922 and now a collectors' item; "A Short History of California," a collaboration with Dr. Rockwell Hunt, former head of the California History Division of the University of the Pacific; and "The Life of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson," who was her sister.

Adolfo and his brother, Alex, owned a cattle ranch near Carmel Mission but when the artists came to Monterey they prevailed upon Adolfo, to open the "Bohemia Saloon," according to Mrs. Isobel Field in her book "This Life I've Loved," the story of her life as the stepdaughter of Robert Louis Stevenson. The artists painted panels along the bar and decorated the small room charmingly. It originally stood on Alvarado street directly opposite from where Del Monte avenue joins Alvarado. Adolfo was one of the popular young men of the town when Mrs. Fanny Osborne and her two children, accompanied by her sister, Nellie van der Grift, arrived in Monterey. Mrs. Osborne later married Robert Louis Stevenson; her daughter, Isobel, married Joe Strong and Nellie married Adolfo Sanchez.

In Mrs. Field's private papers, which she presented to the Stevenson House in Monterey, together with articles of furniture, books and other possessions of Stevenson, she described Sanchez as "very handsome, tall, dark, with flashing eyes, dazzling white teeth and a rich baritone voice."

He belonged to an old Monterey family. His father had been a councillor of Monterey and "nearly everybody in the town was related to him." A bit further in the

manuscript she writes: "He was so kind, so sincere and honest, with the trusting confidence in the honor of other people that was the undoing of the early Californians."

Nellie van der Grift is described as the intellectual one of the five sisters, and Mrs. Stevenson as the beauty. "There was a suggestion of the Indian in her aquiline nose, black eye - brows and long straight hair." Adolfo Sanchez promptly deserted all others and fell in love with Nellie."

When the late Louis Adolfo Sanchez, named for Robert Louis Stevenson and for his father, was a small child in Monterey, Stevenson wrote this poem for him and it is published in his famous "A Child's Garden of Verses":

MY NAME-CHILD

"Some day soon this rhyming column, if you learn with proper speed, Little Louis Sanchez, will be given you to read.

Then shall you discover, that your name was printed down

By the English printers, long ago, in London town.

In the great and busy city where the East and West are met

All the little letters did the English printer set;

While you thought of nothing, and were still too young to play,

Foreign people thought of you in places far away.

Ay, and while you slept, a baby, over all the English lands

Other little children took the volume in their hands;

Other children questioned, in their homes across the seas:

Who was little Louis, won't you tell us, mother, please?

Now that you have spelt your lesson, lay it down and go and play,

Seeking shells and seaweed on the sands of Monterey,

Watching all the mighty whalebones, lying buried by the breeze.

Tiny sand-pipers, and the huge Pacific seas.

And remember in your playing, as the sea-fog rolls to you,

Long ere you could read, how I told you what to do;

And that while you thought of no one, nearly half the world away

Someone thought of Louis on the beach at Monterey!"