

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Life In Early-Day Monterey

There were many fascinating stories of early days in Monterey. Today it will be interesting to repeat a few as told by Mrs. Isobel Field, the daughter of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson, in her original manuscript of "This Life I've Loved," some not used when the story was published. That manuscript is now in the collection of Stevensoniana in the Stevenson House in Monterey.

A few fashionable women found their way to Monterey stopping at the St. Charles Hotel, writes Mrs. Field. It was then a rambling two-story frame house with wide verandas, many rooms, bad cooking and one bathroom, she remembers. The ladies did not stay long, but each and every one, made some excuse to meet the handsome Adolfo Sanchez who later married Isobel Field's aunt, Nellie Van der Thrift.

"The Californians taught us," Mrs. Field noted in her manuscript, "some fine old Spanish dances. The jota, a sort of quadrille danced to waltz time, was the one we liked best. Once we had a cascarone party and we asked the Californians we knew to come in the costume of their parents. These were not 'fancy dress', they were actual garments that had been laid away for years in cedarwood chests.

"The Senorita Bonifacio lent Nellie and me dresses to wear that night, red silk and yellow trimmed with heavy flounces of black lace. The slippers she offered us were too small and when we asked what kind of stockings, she wore she laughingly said, 'none.' No one had stockings in those days, the little satin slippers with low heels were worn over bare feet."

"The cascarone party was a great success," Mrs. Field wrote in her notes, now in safe keeping in the vault at the Stevenson House.

"Adolfo Sanchez arrived, standing in the doorway dressed in the costume of his grandfather. There was a sudden pause of startled admiration and then a burst of applause. He wore velvet slashed trousers, a short velvet embroidered jacket, ruffled muslin shirt and a brilliant serape over one shoulder. His hat was a black low-crowned one with a wide stiff brim worn over a red silk handkerchief that bound his head."

Later in the notes, Mrs. Field described the hat as so heavy it took two hands to lift it and the brim had an

upturned edge that Adolfo said was originally ornamented with silver dollars pierced so that they could be sewn on. These were not solely for ornament, but it was said that they would deflect the slash of a knife.-

Mrs. Stevenson painted Adolfo in the hat, according to Mrs. Field. Too bad that picture is not available to add to the costume collections now on display in the various state monuments in Monterey.

Adolfo and his brother, Alex Sanchez, owned the Bohemia Saloon in Monterey. This celebrated and popular resort was situated in the Gomez block until November of 1891, when it was moved to the Sanchez corner of Franklin and Alvarado.

The "Bohemia" received its name in the day when the old capital was a field of action of the numerous artists and literary men who had been "attracted hither to depict nature in its grandest form," according to an old clipping we have found. It was while Jules Tavernier, Julian Rex, Stanton, Joe Strong (who married Isabel Osborn, later Field), Charles Rollo Peters and many others who went about pallet in hand placing on canvas such scenery as Monterey could furnish.

During these days the "Bohemia" was their meeting place. It was here where the boys could congregate and tell stories - tell their experiences as they were, and while away the dull hours of the night. The Sanchez brothers assisted in making life merry with their musical talents.

Such were the men who visited this famous old place which in its prime bore evidence of their skill in the shape of a beautifully but hastily drawn landscape or figure, here and there. The old counter had three pretty landscape pictures painted respectively by Stanton, Peters and Strong. On the door panels were figures drawn by various artists, including Tavernier, and others equally famous. Time and poor varnish were reported to have had their effect on some of these pictures but still many of them were easily recognized as works of art in 1891.