

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 31, 1962

### **As Others Saw Us**

Some amusing facts about old Monterey in 1875 as observed by other communities in California are of interest today. The Sacramento Bee had this to say:

“There is no spot on the coast whose natural advantages are at all equal to Monterey. Santa Cruz is no comparison nor is Santa Barbara; but these places; have the start, and only Yankee energy can bring Monterey up to them. The first thing needed is a good hotel, not in town but near the woods and sea bathing . . . There are many great and wealthy men in Monterey, who could, if they would, build such a one as required; but they are natives and do not care for active life or investments of such character; they are slow-going people, content to let what they deem well enough alone, and take no ventures of that character.”

The following item is from the Kern County Courier of the same year: “For many years no town in the state has been less known than Monterey . . . a quaint old Spanish town, without life or movement, and apparently belonging to some forgotten arcadian age. Yet for 80 years it was the most important town in California, the seat of government and the commercial center , . . . The location of the old town is delightful - a gentle slope at the foot of the hills, of a moderate elevation, covered with ever-green trees and facing one of the finest harbors in the world. The climate is most delightful that can be imagined, the only natural cause that brings life to a close there is old age.”

During his stay in Monterey, William Rich Hutton, the young surveyor who made maps of Monterey in 1847 and who came to California in 1847 as a clerk to his uncle, an Army paymaster, wrote the following article concerning Monterey and his stay here. This with other articles, letters and drawings are now deposited in the Huntington Library at San Marino in Southern California.

“The Rev. Walter Colton, Chaplain of the Navy, was the builder of Colton Hall, and elected Alcalde of Monterey. Colton Hall contained the only ball room in Monterey, although the ‘sala’ in the private homes was generally large enough for the very respectable dances. Many ‘bailes’ were given in it (Colton Hall) by the officers and others, which were always well attended. Paz seules, ‘la jota’ and ‘el son’ were danced in the intervals between

the waltzes the latter being the national dance - in which the women were more graceful than I have elsewhere seen.

“Judge Colton was an active administrator of his office and was able always to maintain good order. Though a very small man, he was fearless, and armed with the cane, his badge of office, he would enter the gambling rooms alone, and confiscate the bank. The gamblers - always Americans - liked him too, though they kept a sharp watch to give notice of his approach.”

Alejandro Malaspino romantically expressed the following first impressions of Monterey when he anchored in the bay in 1791:

“The Corvettes having been anchored and moored, not only the beauty of the day that dissipated the fog and presented Nature’s most radiant face, but also some refreshments sent to us by the company lieutenant, Jose Arguello, acting governor of the Presidio, demonstrated the agreeableness of our task.

“We cannot abandon the description of the pleasant coasts of Monterey without a slight sketch of the beautiful appearance that nature gave it upon first view of the port, when the fog dispersed between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and when the sun’s brilliance and the leafy foliage of the surrounding country joined, with the soft zephyrs of the sea breezes from the northwest.”