

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 10, 1962

Notes On The Flag-Raising

It is with regret that the Monterey History and Art Assn. and the Navy League could not have arranged to have the re-enactment of the Sloat landing at the Custom House on July 7 this year, but it seemed impossible for the U. S. Navy to send ships, men or the Treasure Island band, because of the problems of the world today. But we must not let the historic event go by without some comment.

A note from Mrs. Elizabeth Noorzey of Berkeley is interesting at this time, for it was on July 7, 116 years ago, that Commodore John Drake Sloat raised the United States Flag at the Custom House.

Mrs. Noorzoy writes: "Last year in the depths of an old trunk we discovered a little relic of interest in connection with the Sloat landing ceremonies. It is a very small watercolor painting of the Custom House and on the reverse in my grandfather's handwriting is the following inscription:

Monterey, California,
July 7, 1896

This day we were near the old Custom House and witnessed the raising of the American Flag at the same place and on the same spot used by Commodore John Drake Sloat of the U.S.N. on July 7, 1846. He was then in command of the Pacific Squadron and took possession of California and raised our flag at Monterey over the Old Custom House erected by Spain and Mexico.

(s) John Heath Bonner.

Mrs. Noorzoy writes: "The artist has pictured no other structure around the Custom House, or no anchor, but the railway tracks for the street cars are faintly indicated. The main portion of the building (the one-story part) is shown as not being plastered, or certainly not of the same material as either end. The flagpole is not pictured as where it is today. We have framed this charming memento of the past and it is now hanging in our Peninsula home where we enjoy viewing it."

The flagpole was erected in its present position before the centennial celebration in 1946, after proof was obtained through excavations in 1946 by a group of archaeologists from the University of California, under the direction of Dr. Aubrey Neasham. After several days of digging, sure enough the end of the original pole was

found in the ground where the present pole now stands and is marked with a bronze tablet. The location was shown in drawings made by William Rich Hutton while in Monterey in 1847, the originals of which are now in the Huntington Library In San Marino.

The old anchor was placed at the north end of the Custom House and unveiled at a ceremony on April 28, 1946, after being hauled up from the Monterey Bay on the anchor of an oil tanker under the command of Capt. A. P. Kurtz. After a call in Richmond it was returned to Monterey and placed where it is now one of our cherished possessions. It is one of the most photographed exhibits, both as a single picture and as the foreground attraction of the Old Custom House.

So naturally neither the anchor, the flagpole or the streetcar line appear in a picture painted many years ago.