

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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An Antique Clock

The buyers of the old clocks about which we wrote in the last Issue of the Peninsula Diary were James Watson, W.E.P. Hartnell and James McKinley, who were residents of Monterey at that time. These parties are now deceased, and it appears that the clock on exhibit in the Custom House is the only existing clock of the three.

The clock bears upon its face the name of the maker and the word "Londres" (Spanish for London), but no date. The word "Silent" indicated by a painter shows that it may be allowed to strike the hour and the half hour, or not, as the owner wishes. The maker probably did not know the Spanish word for silent, so used English.

The works are of brass and very heavy; so much so, that experts say it will go on for another century without wearing out. It is a seven-day clock with a musical sounding bell, entirely unlike in sound of those of the present day. While in the possession of Watson, the former owner, it stopped; and he, for a time, felt lost without that which had been his companion for many years. There was no matchmaker "in California then, and no one whom he knew could give speech, tone, and movement to his trusted friend.

A vessel which had come to Monterey from the Sandwich Islands, was about to return to the Islands to commence another like voyage. Watson, with many instructions of care to the captain of the ship, entrusted the clock to him, to have it put in order, and return it to him. This was about the year 1844.

In the course of time, the vessel returned to Monterey and the captain instead of bringing the clock to Watson, brought him a bag containing \$600 all in silver. There was no gold at that time. Some person in the Islands, knowing the clock and its previous history, had prevailed upon the captain to leave it there and take the owner the money.

Watson indignantly, refused the offer of \$600 made to him and demanded the clock should be brought back to him, which was done upon the succeeding voyage.

When Watson died, he bequeathed the clock to his daughter, Narcisa; because as his will recites, "I know it will be take care of."

E. L. Williams, Paul Pioda's grandfather, wrote the following concerning the clock: "The writer some years ago (1874) had a gentleman living in London make a search in the old directories of the city for the name of the maker of the clock, that some idea might be formed of the date when it was made. The answer returned was that after looking as far back as 200 years, the name could not be found, and he suggested, therefore, that the maker was in business and discontinued before the publication of the oldest directory of the city of London that he had been able to find.

In a book published several years ago "The Book on American Clocks," by Brooke Palmer, The Macmillan Co., the author tells us: "Before the Revolution, the tall clock was the only clock made. The maker of the tall clock used only the simplest tools, hammer, drill, file and sand for casting. After the Revolution smaller types of clocks were made, as the Wag-on-the-Wall were made. The Willards of Grafton, Mass., brought the banjo clock to its final perfection. Not until the beginning of the 19th Century was factory production of clocks begun in America."