

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 18, 1963

A High-Spirited Girl Wins A High-Spirited Horse

At the moment when we are hoping for the safety of the Rodriguez Adobe on the west side of Alvarado street near Franklin, an amusing story will not go amiss in impressing local folk with the fact that there actually is a great deal of history in connection with the old building. The story features Dona Escolastica Rodriguez de Dye, the daughter of Senor Rodriguez, and mother of the late Mrs. Martha Bolton, for many years a resident of the Monterey Peninsula.

Dona Escolastica was the wife of Job Dye, an early merchant of Monterey and business partner of Thomas Oliver Larkin.

Parts of this story today were told to me by Mrs. Bolton, other parts were gleaned from old newspapers or from friends who had known the family.

Job Dye, owner of the sailing ships which brought the merchandise in to Monterey for his store, was much older than his 16 year-year-old bride, Escolastica. Mrs. Bolton told that her mother, born in 1822, was high-spirited and daring as well as lovely to look upon.

Mr. Dye liked to "show off" his lovely wife as they rode about in a carriage with a driver occupying the front seat.

Her father, Mrs. Bolton said, shipped gold dust from the mines, hiding it in the collars of the horses. This dust was often used late in Monterey to fill cascarones which added to the gaiety of the dances and parties of the old town.

Mrs. Bolton was very proud of the authentic story of her mother's winning of the stallion Ten Thousand Dollars from Gov. Pio Pico. He had brought the animal from the headquarters in El Cuartel, he let it be known that, in his opinion, there was not one Monterey who could ride the horse.

This was said in the presence of Jacinto Rodriguez (builder of the old adobe on Alvarado street.) Jacinto was the cousin of Escolastica. She heard the story and challenged his statement. Rider of horses since early childhood, she had no fear. Riding the side saddle and wearing the long habit of ladies of that day, she mounted the animal.

"Many a time I have heard it told," Mrs. Bolton said. "Madre mia graceful and handsome, using the whip on the animal to show it who was master."

History tells it just as her daughter has told it, that Escolastica rode the animal through the streets of Monterey to the edge of what is now Pacific Grove, and running with her were several hundred Spanish residents. On her return, she rode to El Cuartel where she made the horse place its hoofs on the steps as she saluted the governor.

True to his promise, the horse was presented to the lovely and fearless Escolastica, and when Commodore Sloat left for New York, Ten Thousand Dollars accompanied him on the Savannah, the gift of the winner.

In return Sloat sent her a library of 1,000 books, and it is 100 of these that the Monterey History and Art Assn. acquired after Mrs. Bolton's death.

A very handsome old cameo brooch also was acquired by the association. The frame on the cameo is made from pure gold which had been presented to Thomas O. Larkin by Sutter, who in turn had received it from James Marshall, the discoverer of gold in California. On the back of the cameo is a glass-covered portrait of Larkin and an engraved greeting to Escolastica from Larkin. In Spanish are the names and a quotation in Spanish; "Do Not Give Up Old Friends for New."

All of the above articles are now displayed in Casa Serrano, the headquarters of the History and Art Assn.

In addition to the articles already named, there are in the Custom House loaned by the association, two lacquer boxes brought from China in the early days, the remains of three very handsome white dresses of real lace and a lovely grey one, which are not always on display because of lack of space. These also were the property of Escolastica Rodriguez de Dye.

Just received to the State of California to remain in Monterey, are a pink silk dress with gold embroidery trim, a brooch with a design made of real hair under glass and two poetry books published in 1836. These gift were sent by Mrs. Madison Smith of Portland, Ore.