

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Monterey's First Cemeteries**

Since we made a tour of the Monterey cemeteries a few days ago, we have found in an old copy of the Academy Scrapbook, formerly published by the Monterey Fresno diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, a few facts of interest concerning the Catholic part of the old cemetery.

The history of the cemetery goes back to 1839. Prior to that date, the records indicate that nearly all burials were in the Carmel church or cemetery.

There were few burials in the Presidio Chapel but the last previous burial in a Monterey town cemetery was on Aug. 25, 1835. In 1838, so the article relates, three persons were buried in the Camp del Alisal. This was at Hartnell College near the present City of Salinas.

After the blessing of the new Camp Santo, Monterey burials are entered under one or two formularies "in Campo Santo" or "in the seminaries." If these refer to the place, and the editor believes they do the first burial in Monterey's present cemetery was Aug. 7, 1839, the body being that of Felipe de Jesus, infant son of Francisco Lugo and his wife Jauanna Briores.

On Jan. 17, 1852, an indenture was made at Monterey between "the mayor . . . the first part and the Catholic Church of Monterey . . . second part, witnesseth that the . . . party of the first part, in pursuance of an ordinance. . . passed by the common council of the said city on November 10, 1851 -in consideration of one dollar to him paid by the party of the second part . . . by these presents doth . . . grant to the said party of the second part all . . . title . . . and interest of the . . . City of Monterey in . . . a . . . tract of land situated in Monterey. . . and described as follows: The western half of the peninsula formed by the first lagoon . . . nearly opposite the Catholic Church of San Carlos . . . to . . . where the land touches the opposite sides of the lagoon . . . the portion thereby granted . . . including the present Catholic cemetery with the walls now standing and appurtenances being the same as delineated in the . . . plan attached thereto, marked: To have and to hold . . . forever, provided always that the same shall be used for burial purposes only."

The document was signed by Charles G. Harron, president of the common council and notarized by W.S. Johnson, deputy county recorder.

On April 10, 1933, the City of Monterey gave the church an unrestricted deed to 8.32 acres of this land in consideration of the release, by the church to the city, of the lagoon frontage for a park and driveway. The east half of this tongue of land is the city's burial ground. Even in pre-American times, as is evident by the old plan, it was partially used as a non-Catholic cemetery, according to the scrapbook article.

Father Casanova wrote In January of 1879: "In the month of March 1876 after the county surveyor had measured off part of the island (should be peninsula) which belongs to the parish of Monterey, for a Catholic cemetery in possession since the year 1770, I enclosed for the first time the said cemetery and installed a gate. I cleared the land, put in a 50-foot well and planted 1,000 trees of various kinds. In all it cost me \$978.00."

When Church, street was paved, many human bones were found, and old maps show a cemetery along the north wall of the old presidio. It is known that all Monterey burials prior to 1839 were in the church building or in the cemeteries quite near it.

Anyone interested enough to drive or walk through the Monterey Cemetery could read the names of many persons who helped to make Monterey and California history. The families of Abrego, Soberanes, Serrano, Sanchez, Hartnell, Castro, Gonzales, Meadows, Post, and many others are resting in his historic ground, not to mention those of a later period who saw Monterey grow from a small Spanish town to the city it is today.

Let's not destroy any more of the headstones that mark the graves of the departed - they were placed there by descendants and are a part of the history of California.