

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Predictions From 1849

Lt. Joseph Warren Revere, U.S. Navy in 1848 in command of the Military District of Sonoma, wrote in "A Tour of Duty in California," published in 1849, a chapter on "The Adobe vs. Frame House" and "A Lay Sermon—What of the Future" which remain entertaining reading after 114 years.

Revere was a lineal descendant of Paul Revere of Revolutionary fame. He spent some time in Monterey before the gold rush. He wrote: "The adobe is the chief building material of the Californians. They (the bricks) are made of mud, mixed with chopped straw, and then dried in the sun. Each adobe is about 2 feet long and 1 foot wide—consequently the walls of the houses are of great thickness. They serve a very excellent purpose in the climate of California, and are very cheap, besides those who carry out the frames of houses will probably find it quite as expensive and difficult to erect and finish them as to procure the adobes and have a house built of them. These movable houses are mere balloons and are a constant source of expense in the way of expense and repairs. I should prefer to rely on adobe."

In books are two sketches of the way San Francisco and Monterey looked during Rev

Writing further on the history of the adobe brick, Revere makes the statement: "The adobe is one of the most ancient of building materials. It is beyond doubt the same brick which Pharaoh commanded the captive children of Israel to make without straw—the thing wholly impossible to do. Thus by this simple link, is Western American directly connected with the most remote antiquity, and associated with one of the most interest passages of Holy Writ. The adobe is still found in Babylon and the ruins of that city.

Revere's prophecy for California bears repeating: "Perhaps a 100 years hence, some curious book-worm, while exploring a musty library, may alight upon this then forgotten volume, and will be tempted to find out what was said and predicted of California at the eventful period of her annexation to the United States, and the discovery of her mineral wealth. The poor Indians will then have passed away; the rancheros will be remembered only as the ancient proprietors of broad lands, which will then have passed into the

possession of more enterprising race who are about to succeed them; the grizzly bear will live only in books and in tradition; the elk will have become extinct; the wild horse will be seen no more; author, editor, publisher, readers, all will have passed away, and mingled with the dust; and perchance new philologists will have so marred our noble English language, that these poor pages will be intelligible only to the learned. Child of the future! What will thou then see?

"Will not a hundred million free and happy human being inhabit the great republic of the United States of America—their habitations extending from the shores of the boisterous Atlantic to those of the placid Pacific?

"And California—what will she then be? Will she have fulfilled the promises of this our day, and be the highway of a mighty commerce, and replete with enterprise and opulence? Will she have become populous and enlightened, the seat of arts and learning, the general rival of her elder sisters in all that is lovely and of good report among men? Son of the hopeful age! Thy response may not reach the dull, cold ear of death; but heaven grant it may be such as, if living, we should not wish to hear!"