

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 30, 1963

### **The Atmosphere Of Old Monterey**

The first printed invitation to a ball in Monterey read as follows: Jose Figueroa, Jose Antonio Carillo, Joaquin Ortego and the licentiate, Rafael Gomez, request your attendance at 8 o'clock this evening at a ball that will be given at the house of the first named to congratulate the director of the colonization and his estimable fellow travelers, the election of deputies for the territory and the country upon its enjoyment of union and peace.

(Signed)

Mariano Bonnilla.

Monterey, Nov. 1, 1834.

William Heath Davis, who came to Monterey in 1831 and who in 1889 wrote a book entitled "Sixty Years in California," says:

"My first visit to California was in 1831. Among the residents in Monterey the most prominent foreigners were: David Spence, Capt. J. B. R. Cooper, Nathan Spear, James Watson, George Kinlock, and W. E. P Hartnell. The first three named were in merchandising. Kinlock was a ship and house carpenter. Hartnell was an instructor in the employ of the Mexican government in the Department of California, of which Monterey was the capital.

"The people lived in adobe houses and the houses had tile roofs; they were comfortable and roomy, warm in winter and cool in summer. Their furniture was generally plain, mostly imported from Boston in the ships that came to the coast to trade.

"Generally, the houses had floors, but without carpets in the early days. The women were exceedingly clean and neat in their houses and personal appearance and in all their domestic arrangements. One of the peculiarities was the excellence of their beds and beddings, which were often elegant in their appearance, highly and tastefully ornamented, the coverlets and pillowcases being sometimes satin and trimmed with beautiful and costly lace. The women were plainly and becomingly attired, many of them played the guitar skillfully and the men the violin.

In 1842, including the military, the white population numbered about 1,000. The white people were known as "gente de razon" or people of intelligence, to distinguish them from the Indian who was considered

on the level with the brute, The "whites" included the families of Spanish and Mexicans and foreigners. Of the Spanish-Californians, meaning the California descendants of the Spanish and Mexican blood, there were several distinct classes. The upper class consisted of those who were or had been in the official stations, either military or civil. There were not many of those families; they were intermarried among themselves and were very aristocratic in their feelings. They prided themselves on what they called their Spanish blood and speech and were lighter and more intelligent than the other classes.

The first state ball in California was held in Colton Hall on the last evening of the convention, Oct. 13, 1849, which was attended by the bon-ton of Monterey.

Gen. Bennett Riley, military governor of California, having been in Monterey two years, returned to the Eastern states in July 1850. On the eve of the departure, the citizens of Monterey tendered him a farewell banquet at the Washington Hotel. Covers were laid for 200 people; the toastmaster of the occasion was Gen. P. H. Bowen. During the evening, Gov. Riley was presented with a gold watch and a gold medal valued at \$600, a gift from the town council of Monterey. On one side of the medal were engraved these words: "To the man who came to do his duty; and accomplished his purpose."