

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 14, 1964

Second Part Of Tale

The story of the builders and first owners of the Old Whaling Station in Monterey is a fascinating one and cannot help but make it historic and well worth saving for future generations to admire and enjoy.

"In August 1929, when in Monterey," Miss Edith Marsh continues, "I was able to see the interior of the old adobe with its two-foot-thick walls. I was glad to find it so well cared for and furnished in antique furniture suitable to the place. In 1926 I had visited the old stone home of the Wights in Ayton, Scotland, and I found that the plan, of the adobe in Monterey is almost like that of the house in Ayton; the stairway leading straight up from a narrow hall from the front door, and rooms opening into the hall on each side. The ceilings are very low.

"Poor grandmother! Her joy in her new home did not last long, for in January 1848, gold was discovered in the California mountains and streams, and of course, grandfather and his family had to go to the gold fields. My mother said so great was the craze and rush for gold that people left their houses standing open. Grandfather likely sold his house to the whalers of Monterey, as it faced the bay where many whales came, and they could sit in the upstairs windows with glasses and when the whales were sighted, go after them."

When the Wights left Monterey in 1848 for the gold fields they went to a place called "Gold Diggings," pioneering in earnest. Mr. Wight did not know anything about mining, according to his granddaughter, Miss Marsh, so he started a grocery store.

In less than two years as a groceryman, Mr. Wight declared he had all the money he desired and took his family back to the States, as they were then called. On the government ship which took them to the Isthmus of Panama, they enjoyed the companionship of General John Charles Fremont, his wife and little daughter, all of whom had also lived in Monterey. They finally landed in New Orleans, where Mr. Wight had his gold dust minted and bought a gold watch, which his granddaughter still had in her possession at the time of her death.

Later the family settled in Illinois, where the builder of the Whaling Station in Monterey died at the age of 45 -

really a young man but think of the life he had lived. He is buried in the east cemetery in Jacksonville, Ill,