

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 11, 1964

Iron-Sheathed House

There was once upon a time a two-story building located on the corner of Lighthouse and Dickman avenues, New Monterey, across the street from Scholze park, that was widely known as the Corrugated Iron House. It was erected by Milton Little, one of the founders of the first library in California. At the first civil election held in Monterey on September 15, 1846, he was elected Alcalde pro-tem.

Little had arrived in Monterey in 1844, and shortly after his arrival engaged in the mercantile business with Thomas O. Larkin, first and only American consul to California. The place of business was on the lower floor of the Larkin House on the corner of Jefferson and Main streets.

After Little's marriage in 1848 to Mary Edgar, they established themselves in their first home, an adobe (now non-existent) opposite the Larkin House.

A few years later, Little acquired 640 acres and established a rancho, bounded on the south and west by the Monterey Presidio and on the east by Monterey Bay, embracing not only that area of the Monterey Peninsula now incorporated as a part of the city of Monterey and locally called New Monterey, but 200 acres which lay within the adjacent section of the Peninsula, later to be incorporated as the City of Pacific Grove.

Desiring to build a house on this rancho, Little decided to erect a type of building then unknown in this part of California. He imported huge timbers of hardwood from Australia and galvanized iron from New York. This iron was cut and grooved according to his specifications, and in immediate readiness for building operations it was shipped from New York on board a sailing vessel bound around Cape Horn.

The timbers from Australia arrived in Monterey Bay, were unloaded and landed on shore without mishap. The ship with the galvanized iron aboard also sailed safely into the bay and anchored. But the first lighter to be loaded with the iron had just cast off from the ship, when a man leaped down, upsetting the small craft and sending its cargo to the bottom. Little had ordered sufficient galvanized iron to cover the outside walls of

six houses, and in the end received just enough to cover four houses.

The ranch house was built in 1851 and was the home of the Little family from that time until after the death of Milton Little on April 27, 1879. Eleven of twelve children first saw the light of day in that house.

After the death of Little the estate became involved in a lawsuit, and the only portion remaining to the heirs was that part of New Monterey between the Presidio on the south and Pacific Grove on the north, and between Foam street on the east and Pine on the west. The galvanized iron house was within this tract.