

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 7, 1964

Larkin Papers

The last of the ten volumes of "The Larkin Papers" has been received by subscribers from the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley.

The regents of the university have been the publishers, and Dr. George P. Hammond is the editor of all 10 volumes, which contain the personal, business and official correspondence of Thomas Oliver Larkin, merchant and United States consul in California.

Larkin, who, Dr. Hammond wrote, was probably the most influential merchant in Mexican California, was the only American consul in the province. He worked under special instruction from the State Department to win Californians over to the idea of separation from Mexico.

From 1847 to 1849 he was naval agent and storekeeper for the United States. Later, when California became an integral part of the United States, Larkin served as a delegate to the state constitutional convention in Monterey in 1849.

Dr. Hammond reports that Larkin's many activities resulted in a rich and varied correspondence. He often kept letters and papers which came to him and made rough drafts of his own writings. These documents, totaling more than 4,000 pieces, have been published in ten volumes of this volume is the last, to be followed by an index.

Of course there is a great deal of reference to Monterey in all the volumes and to local people of Larkin's time in California, including such names as Cooper, Vallejo, Leese, Fremont, Stearns, Ord, Dye and Brannan.

"Larkin's own career came to an untimely end. On a trip to his Sacramento properties late in October, 1858, he fell ill of an intermittent fever, probably typhoid, and returned to San Francisco where he died at his home within a week. The newspapers notices of his death lauded him as one of California's distinguished pioneers, a good man who had endeared himself to all people." With those remarks, Dr. Hammond closed his preface to the "Larkin Papers."

On the last few pages of Volume X appear two articles reporting the death of Thomas Oliver Larkin, one from

the Daily Alta Californian, the other from the Daily Evening Bulletin.

Quoting from the Alta Californian of Oct. 28, 1858: "To the memory of such a man, the most appropriate tribute that we can pay is to give the public a brief notice of his life, for by the acts of his life here in California, he had endeared himself to all the people...

"What more can we add in this brief and humble tribute to the memory of a pioneer and good man, devoted to California and her welfare, except to say that he laid himself down to rest, at peace with all the world, and with an unfaltering trust in the divine goodness of Him whom he had served with faithfulness in this life, doing unto others as he would that others should do unto him, in all things."

The funeral of Mr. Larkin was held from Trinity Episcopal Church in San Francisco on Saturday, Oct. 30 at 12 o'clock, and was attended by the Pioneer Assn. and several of the military personnel of the city. The last exhibition of his enthusiasm that was witnessed was on the occasion of the arrival of the Overland Mail by the Butterfield route, in the short space of 23 days and 23 hours.

Thomas Oliver Larkin served as American Consul here in Monterey. He built the well-known Larkin House at the corner of Calle Principal and Jefferson street, and there he lived until going to San Francisco to reside a number of years later. His granddaughter, Mrs. Alice Larkin Toulmin, acquired the house and after residing there happily for some time presented the historic home to the State of California as an historical monument in 1957. It is open for tours daily except Monday and Tuesday.