

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Stephen Clark Foster

"El Quacheno, How I want to help make the Constitution of California-Stirring Historical incidents" by Stephen Clark Foster, delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1849, was published a few years ago by the Dawson Book Shop in Los Angeles. The original account of Foster's trip to Monterey from Los Angeles in 1849, was printed in the Los Angeles Evening Express on March 8 and 9, 1878.

In Dawson's "El Quacheno," the publisher states that they have reproduced the subtitle as it appeared originally; "How I want to help make the Constitution of California-stirring Historical incidents." It seems probable that "want" is a typographical error for "went" a word more in accord with the theme of Foster's story.

Stephen Clark Foster was 28 years old when he was elected a delegate to the California Constitutional Convention. He had graduated from Yale, taught school in Virginia and Alabama, and attended Louisiana Medical School in New Orleans, practiced medicine in Missouri, traded in New Mexico and Sonora, served as interpreter for the Mormon Battalion and as Alcalde in Los Angeles. In the 59's he served as state senator and was also first superintendent of schools in Los Angeles.

After Foster was elected a delegate to the Monterey convention he began to worry who was to pay the expenses of such a trip and he wrote: "I was at first dubious about going, hardly considering the honor to be acquired by helping the administration out of its difficulties would be fair consideration for the money to be paid out of my own pocket."

After a consultation with his father-in-law, Don Antonio Maria Lugo, he decided to make the trip at any cost. Lugo told Foster to stop with his sister, Dona Maria Antonia, the widow of old "Sergeant Vallejo." When Foster asked for a letter to her, Lugo replied: "The letter I can not write and she can't read, for we had no schools in California when we were young. I tell you what I will do I will make Jose loan you "El Quacheno." My sister knows the horse, for I rode him to Monterey three years ago, and she knows my son would lend the horse to no man in California except his old father."

Foster borrowed \$100, rode the horse, and became an independent delegate from the District of Los Angeles to the Constitutional Convention in Monterey.

In the trek to Monterey Foster was accompanied by Stearns Dominguez and Carrillo. They started on August 20, 1849, and traveled at the rate of 60 or 70 miles a day (poor horses and riders!). Each night they lodged in a private home—free gratis. The last day's ride was from Soledad Mission to Monterey, down the west side of the Salinas River.

Foster relates that they arrived at Monterey near sunset, after a warm, dusty day's ride. Stearns stopped with Don David Spence, Carrillo and Dominguez rode on to the house of Don Augustias de Ximena, a niece of the former. Carrillo pointed out the house of Senora Vallejo to which Foster went and received a hearty welcome.