

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Watson Family

The death a few days ago of Grover Cleveland Nason in Hermosa Beach reminded me of the article I once wrote about his family which seems well worth repeating here after 15 years.

Mr. Nason was the grandson of Louisa Morena, whose marriage to Thomas Watson took place in Monterey about 1850.

The grandfather of Mr. Nason was James "Santiago" Watson, who ran away from the home in England as a boy and for some time afterward sailed on British ships. As a member of the crew of an English whaling vessel, he came to California as early 12 1824.

At Santa Barbara he left the ship and walked over the mountains to Monterey. Until his death almost 40 years later he was intimately associated with commercial, civic and educational enterprises for the development of this locality.

The business that in the early days attracted the attention and efforts of James Watson was the buying of hides and tallow for shipment to other counties. Spanish cattle were driven from various parts of California to the vicinity of Monterey, where they were slaughtered for hides and tallow, the meat being free to all who wish.

Watson retained his enthusiastic devotion to his native land and cherished the hope that Mexican authority in California might yield to English supremacy.

J. Alexander Forbes was the other Englishman who favored British rule. On one occasion he sent a letter from San Jose to Mr. Watson urging him to raise the English flag over Monterey, adding the request that a flag be made if none were to be secured in the town.

In later days Mr. Watson recognized the advantages to be derived from the union of all states from the Atlantic to the Pacific shores, and he became intensely loyal to his adopted country.

As early as 1832 he was a member of the *Campania de Extrajeros de Monterey*, an organization of foreigners formed for the defense of Monterey, Headed by W.E.P. Hartnell it often met in the Hartnell home.

During 1836 he audited the accounts of the Monterey Council and often was chosen to serve as a member of the body. When General Sutter obtained his naturalization papers in 1840, Mr. Watson and David Spence were witnesses.

During the same year Mr. Watson and a Mr. Allen were competitors with Larkin in trading in Monterey. In 1844 he was one of eight citizens who donated \$100 each to maintain a public school of higher grade than was then held in Monterey. Throughout his active life he was enthusiastic in his support of educational projects.

In Sir George Simpson's travel letters during his visit to Monterey in 1842, he described Mr. Watson as a "Londoner from Redriff (a part of London), whose father has been in the public line, keeping the Noah's Ark between Globe Ferry." Mr. Larkin described James Watson as an unassuming honest man, who did not meddle in politics. Others names him as a very generous man.

About 1830 he married Mariana Escamilla, who was descended from a noble Spanish family long identified with Mexico and California. Purchasing the San Benito rancho in 1850, he remained there until his death in 1863. He was buried at San Antonio Mission.

Within a short distance of the Santa Lucia range and also in proximity to the Salinas River, stood the old adobe ranch house, constructed with portholes, so the story is told, so that the inmates could see out and better protect themselves from attacks.

There were 12 children in the Watson family, of whom the following reached maturity. Thomas, Frank, Alfredo, David, Mrs. Canfield, Mrs. Gomez, Mrs. James Gleason, Mrs. E.L. Williams and Mrs. Joseph Hartnell.

Mrs. Fred Treat of Carmel was the daughter of Thomas Watson, elected sheriff off Monterey County in 1866, and the granddaughter of James Watson. Paul Pioda, Salinas attorney, is the grandson of the late Mrs. E.L. Williams and the great grandson of James Watson.