

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 7, 1965

Williams Voyage

Mr. E.L. Williams, about whom we have written in the past, composed the "Narratives of a Voyage, New York to Monterey, Via Panama in 1849" which we have had the privilege of reading and enjoying. The dedication is "to my children and to their children," signed and dated "E.L. Williams, Santa Cruz, December 25, 1903."

Mr. Williams was the grandfather of Paul Pioda of Salinas, and the son-in-law of James Watson, who came from England about 1830 and settled in Monterey, where he was a competitor of Thomas Oliver Larkin in the mercantile business.

Mr. Williams' wife was Narcisa Watson, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Watson. Mr. and Mrs. Williams became the parents of Helen Williams, who married Charles Pioda. Paul Pioda was their son, James Watson was also the grandfather of Mrs. Fred Treat of Carmel.

Mr. Williams begins his diary of the voyage to California:

"It was in the month of August, 1849, I received from my good cousin, Joseph Boston, a letter from Monterey, where he had been for about a year, telling me to go to the Astor House, then the great hotel in New York City and ask for a certain major of the United States Army who would deliver to me a package of gold dust, 30 ounces, which I was to dispose of and after paying certain accounts with the balance, pay my way without delay to California!"

Joseph Boston had a store in Monterey in the Casa de Oro on Olivier street, now an historical landmark under the supervision of the Division of Beaches and Parks of the State. This building was given to the State of California a number of years ago by Miss Margaret Jacks and her sister. It was built in the early 1840s.

The Boston family moved to Santa Cruz in the 1850s, according to the records of St. James Episcopal Church. It was Mrs. Boston's nephew, David Aimi Donzel, who received the first Episcopal baptism in Monterey in Colton Hall on July 30, 1854; his burial service was registered in the records of St. James by Bishop Kip.

Mr. Williams continued "How joyous I felt! With what wings I flew to the Astor House. The major was not in, and I never saw him, but the clerk of the hotel handed out to me a round package in which had been ground

mustard, as I discovered upon opening it, and had been used by my cousin to send the gold dust.

"Upon the clerk putting the package into my hand, I, not expecting a weight of two pounds for such a small package, let it fall.

"I took the gold dust to the store, and there was great excitement, for it was one of the first lots that had come to New York. Many of the neighboring merchants and their clerks came in to inspect it. Finally it was sent to the United States mint at Philadelphia to be minted; the yield was something over \$17 per ounce."

Mr. Williams bought a ticket on the steamer Crescent City, which would not leave for two weeks after he received his gold dust, so he determined to see New York. His first class passage to Panama cost him \$125; a ticket to connect with the steamer California cost \$100 additional.

He described his leave taking of New York as follows: "At the store was my carpet bag packed with a change only, for I had been advised to take as little baggage as possible; consequently the bag and a pair of blankets was my all."

Mr. Williams wrote an interesting paragraph telling of his forethought in New York:

"I will state here that in New York I picked up a pamphlet telling one how to do, and what to do, when going to California via Chagres.

"From this little pamphlet I learned that eight dimes equal one dollar and to have a bargain rectified before an alcalde, and other items and hints which I found of great value to me."

Mr. Williams stated that he still had the pamphlet with him in Santa Cruz in 1903.