

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Job Well Done

In Looking over the history of past re-enactments of the Sloat landing the dedication of the Sloat Monument on Presidio Hill and the annual celebration each July 7 of the raising of the American Flag at the Old Custom House, I have found many interesting facts which may be of interest to our readers.

At the first annual meeting of the Monterey History and Art Association, a report was given of the year's work from January, 1931, to January, 1932, signed by Col. Roger S. Fitch, President. We quote:

"At the suggestion of the association, the city authorities secured permission for the USS Nevada to remain here to participate in celebrating the 85th anniversary of the raising of the American Flag over the Custom House by Commodore John Drake Sloat on July 7, 1846.

"In addition to the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps participating, many distinguished people of the Peninsula were present, including a number of descendants of noted Spanish, Mexican and American actors in the epochal event of California's history."

Another clipping from The Herald, written April 12, 1940, contains this reference:

"From contemplation of Monterey's historic past and work that has been done to preserve its heritage, attention to the Monterey History and Art Association members was directed toward still greater future efforts by speakers who addressed the group at a dinner meeting.

"Climax of the evening was a decision reached by acclamation to support a proposal to make Monterey the center of a state-wide celebration in 1946 of the 100th anniversary of Sloat's landing at Monterey July 7, 1846, to claim California for the Union.

I found another Herald article dated Feb. 3, 1956, with this information:

"At the January meeting of the board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Association, the members voted to make this year's observance of the 110th anniversary of the raising of the Flag at the Old Custom House on July 7 truly a patriotic and historic event. J.F. van Loben Sels, the president of the association,

appointed Allen Knight past president, as chairman of the planning committee."

The article goes on to say: "In fact the dramatic seizure of California by John Drake Sloat has received widespread recognition in memorial services only seven times in the past in Monterey—in 1886, 1896, 1905, 1936, 1946, 1954 and 1955."

Since the Monterey History and Art Association took on the responsibility of the celebration in 1932, not many celebrations have been missed, except during the war. Some have been poorly attended, possibly only 25 or 30 persons standing around to listen to the proclamation being read and possibly to listen to some music.

But these last two years under the chairmanship of Rear Adm. C. Tod Singleton (USN-ret) and a few years before that with the late Allen Knight in charge, have been rewarding to all who have planned and worked for a celebration which would be state and nationally recognized.

Adm. Singleton appointed two years ago by the history and art association president and accepting the responsibility for the 1965 celebration, has worked for the intervening year to make this recent observance even better than anyone could hope for.

The association thanks the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, the Navy, the Army, the City of Monterey and the Navy League for their cooperation and great interest in the observance of this most important event. The Army supplied seven buses for the use of those in attendance who wished also to attend the ceremony at the Sloat Monument on Presidio Hill.

The board of directors of the association expresses its deep appreciation and admiration to Adm. Singleton for his devotion to a task well done.