

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Old French Consulate

The historic old adobe building located on the shore of El Estero at the foot of Franklin street, now known as the Girl Scout - House, was not always in that location.

It once stood on Fremont street between Munras and Abrego streets and was popularly known as the "Tamale Parlor."

But that name was not correct for it was originally the French Consulate in Monterey. It dates from the early 1830s, was built as a residence and used as a consulate from 1843 to 1846.

The adobe was the second building of historic value to be carefully measured, numbered, etc., by J. C. Anthony and built up again by that gentleman on city owned property on El Estero. The first one was the Sherman Rose adobe about which I wrote recently.

Louis Gasquet was probably the first representative of the French government to California. Gasquet wrote letters to his homeland telling of the happenings in Monterey and to his government concerning the arrest and imprisonment of Henry Cambuston, French schoolteacher who struck Capt. Narvez at a ball that was being given at the home of Dr. Stokes (now Gallatin's).

After Commodore Sloat took charge of Monterey, Gasquet had many quarrels with the Americans and always came out second best. His anger boiled over when sentries were placed around the consulate, as he was suspected of receiving couriers from Castro and otherwise aiding the Mexicans.

He became so insolent that Commodore Stockton ordered him to leave Monterey within 48 hours, which he refused to do, so he was held prisoner in the Consulate for 51 days, a period he indignantly wrote home as "well counted and very long," and he demanded "glorious reparation."

In October 1846 Gasquet was sent back to France and M. Moerenhaut took his place. Letters from the Consulate describing events in Monterey during the latter's regime are interesting.

His appointment as consul from France to Monterey was for him the culmination of an adventurous career,

and the reward for services rendered in assisting in the spread of French influence and empire in the Pacific.

Moerenhaut was appointed consul of the second class at Monterey on April 26, 1845, at an annual salary of 15,000 francs. He received the news of his appointment in March 1846, and though delayed by the outbreak of war in Tahiti, soon left for his new appointment, and arrived in California in October.

For the rest of his long life, he was to call California his home. He reported fully and accurately the social, Industrial, and commercial developments and the discovery of gold, quicksilver, and coal.

As a result of the revolution of 1848 in France, however, the consulate at Monterey was suppressed though he remained in charge until 1859, when he returned to France.

On March 11, 1852, the prince president, Louis Napoleon, appointed him "vice consular agent of Monterey with the title of Honorary Consul of the Second Class," at a salary of 6,000 francs and all receipts of the office, subordinate, however, to the French consul at San Francisco, then M. Dillon.

He returned at once to California. During his absence from Monterey his house had been sold at auction at a great loss to him, and Monterey had meantime lost most of its importance as the former capital of California. It was no longer the port of entry for immigrants.

In 1859 the French consulate was moved to Los Angeles, where Moerenhaut was impressively inaugurated on October 29. He took up these new duties with enthusiasm and became widely known and respected. At his residence he presided in 1876 over the celebration of the centenary of American independence.