

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Gov. Alvarado's Clock

In the old Custom House there is on display a clock once in the possession of the late Gov. Juan Bautista Alvarado, governor of California from 1836 to 1842. The "Governors Clock", a simple tall clock with a music box, was purchased by the Monterey History and Art Association in 1944 from S.T. Butler of San Francisco.

It has been known through the years as "The Governors Clock", it having been in the governor's possession for many years. When wound up with an almost crude iron handle on one side, it plays a tune much to the enjoyment of all who have been privileged to hear it.

The clock was made in Germany about the year 1789, and purchased by a Britisher who installed it in his London home, where it remained until brought to Monterey by W.E.P. Hartnell in 1829. The early Montereyans, with their faculty for apt names, promptly nicknamed it "El Mon de Tiempo" and it was known by that name for many years.

When Juan Bautista Alvarado became governor in 1834, he purchased the clock from Hartnell for 500 "cueros" (hides). It remained in the possession of the Alvarado family until David Spence acquired it and gave it to Anastacia, a domestic in the Spence home. Anastacia, was married to a Spaniard, Juan Alvarez.

According to the late Fred Feliz of Camp Steffani of Carmel Valley, Alvarado died when Feliz was 10 years old. Anastacia was fond of the boy and gave him the clock. Feliz's mother was from Baja, California, and married Jules Simoneau, who was the friend and benefactor of Robert Louis Stevenson during his residence in Monterey.

Simoneau was the father of Mrs. Thomas (Josephine) Fussell, who now lives in the family home on Van Buren street in Monterey.

The old clock finally found a resting place for a time in the reading room of Jules Simoneau's restaurant on Pearl street (torn down in the 1920's to put Tyler street through to Munras), where as a writer of the day said, "ticks as clearly and plays as sweetly as it did in the days of yore."

Fred Feliz gave the clock into the keeping of his sister, Mrs. S.F. Butler, and when Mr. and Mrs. S.F. Butler

moved to San Francisco they took the clock with them. Now it is back home where it is a valued part of the historic exhibits in the Custom House, on loan from the Monterey History and Art Association.

A note from David L. Walton to George Leutzinger tells an interesting story about an old mooring post of the Presidio, which had been pushed off the bank and rescued from floating out to sea by Mr. Walton, who added this to his letter; "It is a post that my historian friend, William Brandon, feels should predate the Custom House" Brandon wrote the American Heritage volume on American Indians.

The mooring post has been on display at Sancho Panza in the old Guitierrez adobe, but has now been taken from there to be preserved for the Nautical Museum for the Allen Knight collection or for some spot in Monterey where it can be seen and not lost.

Mr. Walton is now in Saigon on staff of the USO there.