

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 7, 1967

Monterey's 100th Birthday

In the Monterey Cypress of February 23, 1889, I have found the leading news story to be "Incorporation."

On June 3, 1870, Monterey held its First Centennial celebration in honor of its 100th birthday; on each June 3rd since the organization of the Monterey History and Art Association, Ltd., that anniversary has been celebrated with a Merienda in Memory Garden at the rear of the old Pacific Building. In 1870 the festivities were under the direction of the California Pioneer Society, with David Spence as the master of ceremonies. A group of pioneers had chartered "The Senator" in San Francisco and made the trip to Monterey by water.

But the incorporation anniversary falls on a still different date. By an act of Congress, passed April 30, 1861, the town of Monterey was duly incorporated. Philip A. Roche, who was then alcalde, was elected the first mayor. Although Monterey did not long remain a city, she kept her city council busy with legal enactments until, on May 11, 1853, an act was approved which amended her charter and, vested the control of her municipal affairs in a board of three trustees.

During the legislative session of 1869 and 1870 an attempt at re-incorporation was made. The bill passed the Assembly but was defeated in the Senate. Another attempt was then made and again a third, which proved to be more successful. In 1873 the act was carried through both houses but the governor failed to sign it.

At last, on June 8, 1889, the Cypress was able to publish the good news: "In corporation! Monterey a city at last! A death knell to silurianism!"

On February 23 of that year the Cypress wrote that the people were unanimous for incorporation and so the editors devoted a column and a half to the story of the plans to carry out the incorporation. The town had been thoroughly posted with notices of a citizens' meeting to be held in Bagby's Opera House. About 7 o'clock Urbane's band marched through the principal streets playing some choice selections thus reminding the citizens of their duty and calling them to assembly. By 8 o'clock, so the story tells, the club room at the Opera House was jammed, to the very doors.

W. J. Towle called the meeting to order and nominations for officers were declared in order. Dr. Westfall was elected chairman and S. J. Duckworth, secretary. Captain T. G. Lambert (custodian of the Custom House and a lumberman) said he favored almost any system, that would give Monterey a legal and proper incorporation.

Walter Little of New Monterey said he was in favor of incorporating with the starting point on the beach near Chinatown following the Point Pinos ranch line to the intersection with the Pescadero line along opposite the western boundary of Del Monte grounds, and hence to the beach. The majority of the residents of New Monterey seemed to be in favor of joining the old town, according to the reporter of the Cypress of that date.

Captain Lambert was the citizen who made the motion that a committee be appointed to examine the lines likely to be decided upon as the future limits of the city of Monterey, and to report the result at the earliest possible moment at a meeting to be called for that purpose. Mr. Duckworth moved that the committee be composed of nine men. The following were elected: Messrs. T. G. Lambert, Little, H. Prinz, Martin Doud, W. J. Towle, William Hannon, W. P. Robinson and H. N. Whitcomb.

Mr. Kent, the owner of the stables in Pacific Grove, said that he thought the dividing line between Monterey and Pacific Grove should be the Point Pinos ranch line. As far as he was concerned, he would not object to having Chinatown, included in Monterey's limits.

J. Pell of Pacific Grove said that as far as he was concerned, Monterey could have the Delmas tract. Then followed the bill to repeal the act to incorporate the City of Monterey, 1853, 1857, 1862 and 1866, and substitute the newly formed bill.