

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 21, 1968

Buildings of Old Monterey

The little handbook of Monterey of which we have been writing has been a source of much information and interesting reading. It was published in Monterey in 1875 by Walton and Curist.

It discusses Monterey and vicinity, Point Cypress, the Whale industry, Pacific Grove Retreat, the Lighthouse, Monterey as a port, the Monterey and Salinas Valley railway, Health and Climate, Increase in Business, Town Offices, Pioneer Residents, Disinterested Opinions, Sea bathing, Iron and Coal Mines, Our Wild Flowers, and many more items.

Listed in the Objects of Historical Interest in the town are: The Cuartel, Colton Hall, The Prison, The Old Block House and Fort, The Old Custom House, The Catholic Church, The Cemetery, California's First Theatre, The Convent, The Old Calaboose and the Old Commissariat.

Of the Cuartel the editors report that it is on California street, is a two-story, ruinous looking adobe building, with a balcony running around it. It was built in 1840 by J. Abrego, acting under orders from Alvarado, and cost \$11,000, redwood then selling at \$50 per thousand feet, and nails at \$36 a keg.

The item concerning the prison is interesting and evidently the editors did not expect Monterey County to have the population of law offenders it has today. The book describes the prison as being "built by Walter Colton adjoining the old calaboose, but in 1855 a new and more substantial one was erected as the county jail, in the school house building. Should Monterey ever recover her position as the County Seat, it would be a great saving to the county, as there need be little extra cost incurred for buildings."

The Old Block House has entirely disappeared. The History and Art Association has marked Fort Mervine on the brow of the hill within the Presidio, overlooking Monterey Bay. The fort was dismantled in 1852, and most of the guns were taken to Benicia.

At the time of the printing of the Hand Book of Monterey, the Custom House was occupied as a private residence by Captain and Mrs. T.G. Lambert. To quote: "In the summer evenings the seats under the portico are occupied by young men and maidens, enjoying the

balmy breezes, and sentimentalizing upon the moonlit wavelets as they break in ripples on the beach."

Of the cemetery the editors say in part: "Old and moss covered patriarchs of the forest, which doubtless were standing long ere the Genoese stepped upon the eastern verge of the Continent, are grouped around in picturesque confusion.

Trees of a younger growth, perchance acorns when beheld by Serra, are intermingled with these; while the northern half of the cemetery is overrun by a dense growth of lupine, covered with flowers of a brilliant yellow. As these flower, typical of jealousy, bloom for a short season above the ground, then fade away and merge into unremembered dust, so it is with the petty jealousies of this life about which we fret so much."

Another ruin in Monterey in 1875 was the convent on Calle Principal, according to the Guide Book, for the Sisters of Charity, and used by them until 1858. The old Calaboose was "built in 1832, by Governor Figueroa."