

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Historic Account Books

There are several amusing items listed in the account books of the firm of Curtis and Conover, one of the first of the stores established in Monterey in 1853. The books were presented to the Monterey History and Art Association by Mrs. Millie Birks, who had had them in safe keeping these many years.

There is an account headed Democratic Committee. Only one charge is listed: "20 gallons whiskey at 1.40 — \$28.00." And there is no record of the amount ever being paid. In spite of the 20 gallons of whiskey the Democrats must have lost. The charge was made September 5, 1854.

There is the account of Captain Davenport from whom launches were hired to go out to the schooners and the steamers, and who supplied wood for the ships also. His initials were I. P. or J. P. It is supposed that he is the same Captain Davenport who was head of one of our early whaling companies, but we do not have the proof of that statement.

As one goes along further in the years, the stories that develop are most interesting. In August of 1859 David Jacks and M. C. Ireland subscribed \$22.00 and \$5.00 respectively to "The Camp Meeting." David Jacks paid \$22.00 for 44 fruit trees in 1859. S. B. Gordon bought two panel doors, which shows that the store sold everything and anything.

Beginning with the spring of 1859 we find records of the Monterey Wharf Company, and by October of 1859 the Wharf Company was sufficiently successful to pay dividends to Jacob Leese, J. R. Comfort, and to the firm of Curtis and Conover. The Wharf also paid taxes amounting to \$35.28.

There were two wharves in Monterey at the time. Henry De Groh (later spelled De Graw) had a wharf in the early 1850s from which planking was shipped for San Francisco wharves. Later the Monterey wharf had most of the business. Henry De Graw was also one of the early sheriffs of Monterey County.

Isaac B. Wall, who was murdered on November 9, 1855, and who had been the lighthouse keeper at Point Pinos, had been a representative from the Monterey district to the State Assembly in the third and fourth legislative sessions. (He had been one of the customers at the

Curtis and Conover store.) These sessions had been held at Vallejo and Sacramento. In the fourth session he was speaker of the Assembly. The California Historical Quarterly printed in 1948, a group of letters of O. C. Wheeler, and he had the following to say about Mr. Wall:

"Mr. Wall has exceeded the anticipations of his warmest admirers and returns to his constituents wreathed with laurels of which they are unitedly proud." Immediately after the fourth session, Mr. Wall became Collector of the Port of Monterey — May 28, 1853.

P. K. Woodside, who had an account in the store Ledger A, was the engrossing clerk for the third session of the Senate in 1852, and also was clerk of the Supreme Court in 1853.

There is a complete story behind the name of Delos R. Ashley, whose account is found in the first ledger. He was district attorney of Monterey County in 1852, state assemblyman in the fifth and sixth sessions, and state senator in the seventh and eighth sessions of the legislature, from Monterey. He also served as state treasurer 1862-1863. He was the son of the famous Ashley who helped to open the West and was an employee of Jeb Smith. Delos was the father of a large family, and his descendants on the Peninsula, include Mrs. Patricia Cunningham of Carmel and the late Mrs. Mabel O'Moran, writer and author of Pacific Grove.

In the May 1949, issue of "Notes From the California Historical Society," the members are asked to read and digest the following:

"The documents, letters, papers, early newspapers and other sources from which history must be written are a great natural resource for the history of any state. Once lost they can never be replaced. Here is a problem of conservation of the utmost importance and one which cannot wait. Time is of essence in acting on preservation and conservation of our historical heritage."

"Citizens of the Peninsula are asked — and urged — to discard no records of any kind or age, nor to allow their friends to do so without first permitting the officers of the Monterey History and Art Association to look them over. They would say 'Let the decision be ours.' "