

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 9, 1968

First Printed Invitation

The first printed invitation to a ball in Monterey read as follows: "Jose Figueroa, Jose Antonio Carillo, Joaquin Ortego and the licentiate Rafael Gomez request your attendance at 8 o'clock this evening at a ball that will be given at the house of the first names to congratulate the director of the colonization and his estimable fellow travelers, the election of deputies for the territory and the country, upon its enjoyment of union and peace."

(Signed) Mariano Bonilla, Monterey, Nov. 1, 1834

William Heath Davis, who came to Monterey in 1831, and who in 1889 wrote a book entitled "Sixty Years in California," says:

"My first visit to California was in 1831. Among the residents in Monterey the most prominent foreigners were: David Spence, Capt. J. B.R. Cooper, Nathan Spear, James Watson, George Kinlock and W.E.P. Hartnell. The first three names were in merchandising, Kinlock was a ship and house carpenter. Hartnell was an instructor in the employ of the Mexican government in the department of California of which Monterey was the capital.

"The people lived in adobe houses and the houses had tile roofs; they were comfortable and roomy, warm in winter and cool in summer. Their furniture was generally plain, mostly imported from Boston in the ships that came to the coast to trade.

Generally the houses had floors, but without carpets in the early days, the women were exceedingly clean and neat in their houses and persons, and in all their domestic arrangements. One of the peculiarities was the excellence of their beds and bedding, which were often elegant in their appearance, highly and tastefully ornamented, the coverlids and pillow cases being sometimes of satin and trimmed with beautiful and costly lace. The women were plainly and becomingly attired, many of them played the guitar skillfully and the men the violin."

In 1842, including the military, the white population numbered about 1,000. The white people were known as "gentle de razon" or people of intelligence to distinguish them from the Indian who was considered on a level with a brute. The "white" included the families of Spanish and Mexicans and foreigners. Of the

Spanish and Mexican blood, there were several distinct classes.

The upper class consisted of those who were or had been in official stations, either military or civil. There were not many of those families, they intermarried among themselves and were very aristocratic in their feelings. They prided themselves on what they called their Spanish blood and speech and were lighter and more intelligent than the other classes.

The first state ball in California was held in Colton Hall on the last evening of the convention, on October 13, 1849, which was attended by the bon-ton of Monterey.

General Bennett Riley military governor of California, having been in Monterey two years, returned to the eastern states in July, 1850. On the eve of his departure the citizens of Monterey tendered him a farewell banquet at the Washington Hotel. Covers were laid for 200 people, the toastmaster of the occasion being General P.H. Bowen. During the evening Governor Riley was presented with a handsome gold watch, and a gold medal valued at \$600, a gift from the town council of Monterey. On one side of the medal were engraved the words: "To the man who came to do his duty and accomplished his purpose."

While the above notice is interesting, it is partly incorrect, according to Mr. Fahey. In the first place, the type was not a Spanish type but an American type, with its full complement of letters. Evidently the printers ran short of the cap W and the lowers case w, and used VV's as an emergency. Only correct W's were used in this article and why such a reason was given for using VV's in various parts of the paper is beyond imagination.

In 1850, Walter Colton returned to New York to write from his journals "Three Years in California," published in 1854. Several excerpts from the book follow: Saturday, August 15, 1846. Today the first newspaper every published in California made its appearance. The honor, if such it be of writing its Prospectus, fell to me.

It is to be issued on every Saturday, and is published by Semple and Colton. Little did I think when relinquishing the North American in Philadelphia that my next feat in this line would be off here in California. My partner is an emigrant from Kentucky, who stand six feet eight in his stockings. He is in buckskin dress, fox skin cap; is true with his rifle, ready with his pen, and is quick at the type-case.

He created the materials of our office out of the chaos of a small concern, which had been used by a Roman Catholic monk in printing a few sectarian tracts. The press was old, enough to be preserved as a curiosity, the mice had burrowed in the balls; there were no rules, no leads, and the types were rusty and all in pi.

It was only by scouring that the letters could be made to show their faces. A sheet or two of tin was procured, and these, with a jackknife, were cut into rules and leads. Luckily we found with the press, the greater part of a keg of ink; and now came the main scratch for paper. None could be found, except what was used to envelop the tobacco of cigar smoked by natives.

A coaster had a small supply of this on board, which we procured. It is in sheets a little large than the common-sized foolscap. And this is the size of the first paper, which we have christened the Californian.

A crowd was waiting when the first sheet was thrown from the press. It produced quite a little sensation. Never was a bank run upon harder; not, however by people with paper to get specie, but exactly the reverse. One-half of the paper is in English, the other in Spanish. The subscription for the year is five dollars; the price for a single sheet is twelve and a half cents; and is considered cheap at that.