

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Monterey's 100th Birthday

The newspaper reporting of events in Monterey in 1870 was so much more descriptive and lengthy than it is today that such a story as the first centennial celebration is amusing reading.

On June 3, 1870 there appeared a delightful report of the celebration of Monterey's 100th birthday in The Democrat. Philip A. Roach, alcalde of Monterey and first mayor, 1849-1850, clipped this news story and added it to a scrapbook which he kept and which was given to the Monterey History and Art Association, by Mr. and Mrs. W.R. Holman to add to the organization's treasures.

"The fete passed off exceedingly well," according to the reporter. "In addition to the population of the town, a great many visitors were present and participated in the ceremonies, all entering heartily into the spirit of the occasion and being fully alive to the significance of the events which they were commemorating.

"Monterey is the Jamestown of this coast, on the rock in front of the quaint little Custom House, built in the Mexican times, first leaped ashore hundreds of the present inhabitants of the state, who since dispersing through every part of its territory, have laid the foundations of a great empire. This is a classic spot, associated in the minds of the people of the state now living and to come, with all the historical events which have signalized the establishment of civilization in one of fairest though among the latest of its possessions.

"The site of the town is exceedingly beautiful and all its surroundings are picturesque and pleasing, every natural object on which the eye falls being lovely and graceful. In front of the town sweeps the broad and crescent-shaped bay which for centuries has been known to navigators as affording one of the securest and easiest-reached havens, in which might lie with perfect convenience any conceivable amount of shipping." A pretty flattering description of the old town.

"To poet, historian and statesman, no other place that looks westwardly over the Pacific, possesses an equal interest; and as the years go on, it will be visited as a sort of Mecca and Monterey will continue through all time the object of tender regard and with something

like veneration," predicted the newspaper reporter 88 years ago.

Here is a bit of human interest inserted in the story by the reporter: "During the repast, Mr. David Spence showed goodness of heart and thoughtful care of a true man, by escorting to a comfortable place, an aged Indian woman who has numbered her 103 years of age, and on whose brow Father Junipero Serra himself set the seal of Holy Christian Baptism. About half past 3 o'clock, Mr. Spence called the crowd to order in the forest and the repast for the day was enjoyed at the picnic grounds."

Speeches were made by Spence, Roche, Senor Joaquin Bolado in his native tongue, and John Savage who closed his remarks with real Irish Gallantry, by proposing the health of the women of California.

The Castroville Argus said of the celebration: "The utmost order prevailed during the entire day and evening, all enjoyed themselves, and the people of Monterey may rest assured that on the 100th anniversary of their city's birth, they strengthened the old ties of friendship binding others to them, and created many more."