



Adobe Dust



S U M M E R 2 0 1 7

Things To Remember

General Membership Notice

2nd Thursday of the month

At the

Juan Sanchez Adobe

(June-August)

6:30pm start time

Upcoming Events

Sat. June 24

Wine & Cheese

Fundraiser

Tues, Aug. 1

National Night Out

Message From the President—Chris Vargas

Summer 2017 is upon us and the MHS has been very active during the first six months of the year. On May 13, we held a lecture and exhibit on the Mexican-American War (1846-148) at the adobe. The lecture/exhibit was well attended and received. On June 10, we will stage our commemoration to D-Day where on the 6th of June 1944 allied forces operation began the liberation of German-occupied northwestern Europe from Nazi control, and contributed to the Allied victory on the Western Front.

Our upcoming June 24 wine & cheese fundraiser has a long history in our organization and Montebello. It is our first fundraiser of the year and an opportunity to increase awareness about the Montebello Historical Society and the Juan Matias Sanchez Adobe. Asking for money is never easy; however, it is nonetheless a necessity for community groups, such as the MHS. Our wine & cheese fundraiser has a specific goal and that is to raise funds for the revitalization and upkeep of the Sanchez Adobe. It may have unexpected benefits such as attracting new members and building bridges with other Montebello community groups.

Our wine & cheese fundraiser will be successful, but we must embrace and support the fundraising effort as a group. This requires that we purchase a ticket (please) and, more importantly, attend our event because we will have a great time.

Let us all make our 2017 wine & cheese event a great success. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 323.819.5103 or cvargas@morganlewis.com. Thank you and I look forward to seeing all of you on June 24 at 6:00 pm.

Thank you and persevere.

—Chris Vargas

The Forgotten War: Mexican-American War



The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) was fought over 169 years ago with our southern neighbor, the Republic of Mexico. I refer to it as the *forgotten war* because it is a war that was not celebrated with parades, political speeches or taught much in school class rooms. Moreover, the Mexican-American war was so close to the U.S. Civil War (1861-1864) that it over shadowed our war with Mexico.

Both nations were young at the time. Mexico had gained its independence (1821) from Spain 25 years earlier. The U.S. had gained its independence (1776) from England 70 years earlier. The relationship between the two young nations was an uneasy one because of border disputes.

But why did the United States of America decide to engage in war with Mexico? Before we answer this critical question, let's step back for a moment and look at the setting in the U.S. and Mexico during the 19th century.

Mexico had fought its struggle for independence for 10+ years starting in 1810. After breaking its 300 year old colonial shackles from Spain, Mexico found itself in serious debt and a fractured nation; resulting in political instability. For example, from 1821 to 1846 every constitutionally elected president (except one, Guadalupe Victoria) had been overthrown by a *coup d'état*.

In 1846 alone, the presidency changed hands four times; the war ministry, six times; and the finance ministry, 16 times.

On the other hand, the U.S. since the beginning of the 19th century had ambitions of expanding westward with the Lewis & Clark expedition (also known as the *Corps of Discovery Expedition*) from 1804-1806. "President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the expedition shortly after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 to explore and to map the newly acquired territory, to find a practical route across the western half of the continent, and to establish an American presence in this territory before Britain and other European powers tried to claim it." However, westward expansion was on the minds of many politicians and U.S. citizens during the 19th century. A growing nation believed it had to become a coast-to-coast continent.

Manifest destiny was a slogan that was coined by John Louis O'Sullivan, an American columnist and editor, who used it to promote the annexation of Texas in the 1845. It was the idea that God had ordained Anglo-American pioneers and the U.S. to expand westward and spread democracy across the continent.

Although there were multiple causes leading to the Mexican-American War, the immediate cause was the annexation of Texas in 1845 and its incorporation into the United States of America, which was admitted to the Union as the 28th state on December 29, 1845. The Republic of Texas declared independence from the Republic of Mexico on March 2, 1836. As a result of the annexation of Texas, Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the U.S. and regarded this act as a declaration of war.



The Forgotten War: Part II

James K. Polk (eleventh U.S. President – 1845-1849) was primarily responsible for the expansion westward and war with Mexico. President Polk was an ardent believer in westward expansionism. The election of 1844 between James K. Polk (Democratic Party) and Henry Clay (Whig Party) would prove to be a pivotal election in the history of U.S. elections. During his campaign for the presidency in 1844, he promised to acquire California as part of the U.S. territory. He ran on an expansionist platform and is considered to be the “dark horse” of the Democratic Party. His opponent, Henry Clay, was a skilled politician dating back to the President John Q. Adams era (1820’s). Mr. Clay was Speaker of the House and served as John Quincy Adams’ Secretary of State. Unlike Mr. Polk, Mr. Clay was opposed to the annexation of Texas and American expansionism. Mr. Polk assumed a political risk with a platform that included the annexation of Texas, which also included taking California from Mexico, but his risk paid off and he became our eleventh U.S. President on March 1845. Our country would be a very different country geographically had Polk not won the election because Henry Clay opposed Polk’s expansionist views and war with Mexico.

In April of 1846, Captain Seth B. Thornton (U.S. Dragoons) was assigned the task of investigating Mexican activities below the town of Matamoros after the annexation of Texas in 1845. Capt. Thornton and his command entered Carricitos Ranch to verify reports of Mexican crossing. Capt. Thornton and his troops were ambushed as the Mexican army hid in the high chaparral. The Mexican army was under the command of Anastasio Torrejón, who commanded the 3rd Cavalry Brigade of Brigadier-General Mariano Arista's Army of the North. Sixteen dragoons were killed or wounded, including Capt. Thornton, who was taken prisoner along with his men. The start of the war between the U.S. and Mexico had begun.

Prior to the ambush of Capt. Thornton and his troops at Carricitos Ranch, President Polk had already concluded that diplomatic efforts had been exhausted and the decision was made to pursue a use of force with the Mexican government. Polk had attempted to negotiate an agreement on the Rio Grande as the border between Mexico and the U.S. and desired to acquire more territory at the expense of Mexico.

On May 9, 1846 Polk held a cabinet meeting was held to address the Mexican question. “All agreed that if the Mexican forces at Matamoros committed any act of hostility on General Taylor forces I should immediately send a message to congress recommending an immediate declaration of war.” Polk recalled in his diary.

President Polk would send a declaration of war to congress on May 13, 1846 and the House of Representatives voted 174 to 14 in favor, and the Senate 40 to 2. War with Mexico would begin in Texas and move into the interior of Mexico and last for two years.

- Chris Vargas



Immigrants and the Civil War: Part I

Slavery was an important issue regarding the Civil War in America, but not the only one. No major war is ever simplistic and a deeper study of immigration policies and practices in the mid-19th century reveals that a gradual shift from a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant population to a diversely non-British/Protestant society (pockets of French and Spanish in Louisiana and Florida, Germans in Pennsylvania, Dutch in New York) created a division among the peoples of the North and South. Founding fathers such as Jefferson upheld the view of the British Imperialists, arguing that immigration should be limited to those who were closely defined as English speaking Protestants. Turning a blind eye to the reality of immigration resulted in several riots in the 1840s and 1850s with several political backlashes such as the “Know-Nothing Party” who promoted the restriction of immigration.

Pennsylvania became a particular area of European immigration, followed by New York and New England. The Great Irish Famine of 1845-52 had millions of Irish competing with white Americans and free blacks for jobs. The upset of poverty later would create political unrest at the advent of the Civil War. Due to less industrialization, the Southern homesteads did not experience the great influx of immigration as the North. However there were some cities such as Savannah, Memphis and New Orleans which experienced populations of up to 25% Irish and a lesser population of free black immigrants from Haiti. European immigrants from the North provided manpower in the beginning of the Civil War but loyalties were often divided as time went on.

The war effort encouraged a vast amount of military segregation among military units. In 1861, local recruiters allowed men from small towns to form their own companies and elect their own officers. The 9th Ohio Volunteer Infantry consisted of mainly German immigrants, gave orders in German and followed German military practices. With 200,000 Germans serving in Union forces, the practice of racial and cultural segregation was considered advantageous. According to Michael Myers in his article “U.S. Civil War” multicultural regiments abounded in New York, however. The cultural diversity of this city was already noticeable during the war. “One polyglot regiment from New York –the Garibaldi Guards—consisted of roughly three hundred Germans, three hundred Hungarians, one hundred Italians, one hundred French, and one hundred combined Spanish and Portuguese.”

The motivations of enlisted immigrants were not political but were economical or based upon a sense of loyalty to neighbor or kin. As historians Richard F. Welch and Susannah U. Bruce note, most immigrants were swayed by their peer groups or families, not by the political rhetoric of either the North or the South. Some expatriates were sent on recruiting trips to enlist their fellow countrymen, like the Irish general Thomas Francis Meagher who traveled to New York to sway his fellow Irishmen.

Perhaps the most telling sign of the war’s disillusionment demonstrated by immigrants was the New York City riot of 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863 was viewed as favoritism for the black people over the Irish and many Irish immigrants feared that the liberated slaves would venture north and take their jobs and raise competition among workers. In order to secure a reasonable legislative balance, in 1862-63 Congress passed a homestead law which allowed immigration for labor contracts. Prior to the war, previous bills had been proposed but they had been blocked by Southern legislators. Once implemented, the homestead law enabled immigrants to more fairly and more civilly become a part of the American work force, thus increasing the production of food, textiles, clothes and military technology. The most important and economically productive labor force were those immigrants who built the railroads.

After the war, changes in the policies regarding immigration were positive in the North and the West. The South remained a less viable situation due to some short-sighted marketing strategies employed by various commissions. As recorded, “Of the three million immigrants who came to America from 1865 to 1873, almost none settled in the South.” Many historians feel that the plantation owners felt that immigrant workers would tolerate the same living conditions as the slaves previously had and treated them poorly assuming their passivity. (continued on page 7)

Montebello: Mixtures and Meanings

It is clearly not easy to answer the question “What was it like growing up in Montebello?” Not something to be answered in a few words and if one travels the social media web pages regarding Montebello one cannot help but notice the great enthusiastic sentimentality associated with Montebello of the 1940s, 50s, 60s to present day. People remember the small eateries and businesses, the parks, the views of the oil fields, Simons brickyard. The migration of families from East L.A. made Whittier Blvd. a passageway of undefined motion that for a time Montebello seemed an extension of East L.A. rather than a city in itself but we tend to see these bedroom communities as mixtures rather than individual cities, such as Los Angeles and the baby boom after World War II. Montebello was indeed a mixture with many meanings.

Even before the War immigrants settled in Montebello. Mike Sonksen, a Los Angeles native, explored the immigrant populations of Montebello in On Location Montebello KCET.ORG (May 22, 2015). From the turn of the century Japanese-American farmers grew flowers, fruits and vegetables in Montebello and owned local flower shops. The communities where these families lived were distinctively Japanese with Japanese markets and small restaurants. Yoshi Nagata, son of Japanese immigrants recalls, “My mother was born and raised in Japan, and came to America after marrying my father. If it weren’t for these local businesses I’m sure it would have (been) much more difficult and stressful for my mother to adapt to a new life in America.” Such was the case transitioning into American culture where neighborhoods (barrios) captured the local regional flavors and customs of home. The new generations in turn were able to grow up in traditional settings while attending American schools where all of these cultures came together: Japanese, Armenian, Italian, Native-American, Hispanic etc. Montebello in the early days fostered a middle class, working class American ideal while retaining traditional foreign values and lifestyles. The dress of new-founded prosperity was colored by various ethnicities following the American dream, a better life, a place to raise future generations.

The Armenian Genocide Memorial built in 1968 is a testament to the Armenian contributions and history in Montebello. From Garfield Blvd. this imposing sculpture towers above the city, a reminder of the oppression and struggles of a people, ironically shared by those of many cultures. Although different, this sculpture symbolizes personal loss and struggle and the attainment of freedom and rebuilding a new life. Armenian neighborhoods in Montebello date back to the 1940s, although several tend to associate Armenian-Americans with cities such as Glendale presently. The Armenian Center, the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Cathedral and the Mesrobian School just east of Montebello are vital parts of the present day Armenian population in Montebello. Each spring the annual Armenian Food Fair and Festival attracts visitors from all of southern California, when Montebello celebrates Armenian pride and culture with traditional food, dance and fun.

The Juan Matias Sanchez Adobe is the best preserved testament to Montebello’s Hispanic past. As far as local businesses, the Mexican-American community expanded commercial development from automotive shops, restaurants, places of entertainment and what can be termed as “mom and pop” establishments. What remains interesting about Montebello is how the commercial-residential areas still occupy the same geography with most activity associated with Whittier Blvd., Beverly Blvd. and the Pomona Freeway. One can look up from a busy intersection and see unpopulated hills in the background. From the Sanchez Adobe and surrounding housing developments you can see the vegetation of the San Gabriel River and remnants of what the terrain was like centuries ago. Montebello still has the feeling of a small community, without the hustle and bustle of tourists visiting an amusement park or tourist attraction as so many other cities now contend with. Old Montebello residents can tell you that they managed to survive without a shopping mall and the relative calm before the Pomona Freeway was built. Montebello still has many old local businesses from flower shops to bakeries and beyond.....you can easily drive by and pass them but any old Montebello resident can tell you where you can find the best Japanese, Mexican, Armenian, Italian food or burger place in and around the city or at least they can tell you where it was “cool” to hang out back in the 40s, 50s and the 60s. Montebello remains a city of mixtures and meanings, proving that “it is a small world after all.” *For a detailed, fun and informative look at Montebello history as abovementioned, visit the 20th Century Room at the Juan Matias Sanchez Adobe, to remember the past or to learn something new. -Barbara Guzman

Civil War Facts

The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) marked the first U.S. armed conflict chiefly fought on foreign soil. U.S. military's first major amphibious attack. In March 1847, when General Winfield Scott invaded the Mexican city of Veracruz from the sea. In what amounted to America's largest amphibious operation until World War II, the Navy used purpose-built surfboats to ferry more than 10,000 U.S. troops to the beach in just five hours. The landings

were mostly unopposed by the town's outnumbered garrison, which later surrendered after an artillery bombardment and a 20-day siege. Having secured Veracruz, Scott's army launched the war's final thrust: a six-month, 265-mile fighting march to the "Halls of Montezuma" at Mexico City.

This was the first time in history the telegraph created new means of communication that updated people with the latest news from the reporters, who were on the scene. On January 6, 1838, Samuel Morse's telegraph system is demonstrated for the first time at the Speedwell

Iron Works in Morristown, New Jersey. It made the general awareness of the war and what battles were lost or won known to a greater number of people. The first female war correspondent, Jane McManus Storm, operated behind enemy lines on a rather risky diplomatic mission. The Mistress of Manifest Destiny by Linda S. Hudson is a great read about the life and times of this woman

American troops used the new flying artillery: horse drawn cannons and artillery soldiers that could move around the battlefield more quickly than ever before, starting to change the way battles were fought.

The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen was authorized by an Act of Congress on December 1, 1845 and was formed at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. The regiment of riflemen, mounted to provide greater mobility than the infantry and equipped with Model 1841 percussion rifles to provide greater range and more accurate firepower than the infantry's muskets or the dragoon's carbines.

Crazyhorse Troop (C Company) was organized on September 1, 1846, with Captain Samuel H. Walker as its commander. He was obtained a the shipment of 1,000 Colt-Walker revolvers he had co-designed with Samuel Colt. The Colt-Walker became the first revolver used by US troops in combat.

Many of the military leaders on both sides of the American Civil War were trained at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and had fought as junior officers in Mexico. This list includes future Union commanders: Ulysses S. Grant, George B. McClellan, William T. Sherman, George Meade, William Rosecrans, and Ambrose Burnside. Military men who joined the Southern secessionists of the Confederate States of America were Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson,

James Longstreet, Joseph E. Johnston, and the future Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Both sides had leaders with significant experience in active combat in strategy and tactics.

According to data from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the last surviving US veteran of the conflict, Owen Thomas Edgar, died on September 3, 1929 at the age of 98. (Image gallery on page 8)

- Jon Reed

Immigrants (continued from page 4)

. A recorded example of such misconception is that of an Alabama planter who hired Swedish immigrants to work his plantation in 1866. After feeding, clothing and housing them as he had his former slaves, they quit within a month. Needless to say, the Southern mentality required adjustment to accommodate the influx of the expanding immigrant labor forces. The U.S. Civil War was a decisive event in the lives of immigrants throughout the United States and immigrants were crucial to the development of military forces and the rebuilding of our nation.

- Barbara Garcia-Guzman

Polk

Beginning with Andrew Jackson, we elected three men from Tennessee and one from Virginia, who had a tremendous impact on White House customs and life. President Andrew Jackson, a frontier man from Tennessee, known as “Old Hickory” is famous for opening the White House to the “people.” However the public ended up trampling and destroying the furniture and carpets in the White House. Jackson at the end of his term was given a thousand pound cheese wheel which was placed in the White House for the public to cut and enjoy. This was our first “cheese giveaway”. Cheese got everywhere.

William H. Harrison, a Virginia plantation owner, was the next President. He died in office, and John Tyler became President. Tyler turned the White House into a true “party” house where the wine and liquor flowed. Tyler remarried while in office, and the partying never stopped. The White House was open every night, it got so bad, that dinners were limited to Thursdays and Sundays, plus two formal dinners per week.

I mention Tyler to contrast the excesses of Tyler with that of James K. Polk in the White House. Polk and his wife Sarah Childress The Polk’s forbade liquor in the White House and often did not serve food at their functions! Sarah made sure they kept the Sabbath, attending church every Sunday. It was said she was a great “talker” educated and well read. He was the first President to keep the White House under budget for food and drink. The parties were cut down to two per week. The former First Lady Dolly Madison was still alive and presided at many of the state dinners. What a contrast with Tyler and previous administrations. However, the Polk’s were the first to serve a “Thanksgiving” dinner in November, before it was created a Federal holiday.

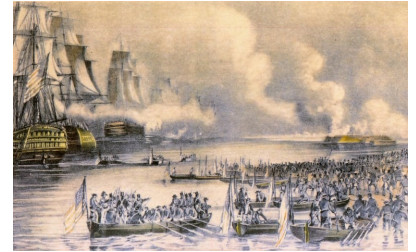
Polk’s style was definitely subdued. *The First Ladies Cookbook* (Dorherty, R. H., Ed., 1966) offers recipes for Tennessee ham and Hickory Nut cake, Southern favorites. He took the job of President very seriously. He said he was “hired to work” so he was at his office every day. He was also our youngest man to be elected President at 49.

Some curious facts about the Polk administration: Polk became associated with the invention of “polka dots” that is, small circles printed on fabric (1844); and the Polka (a fast couple dance). Of course Polk is associated with the maxim: “Manifest Destiny” that is, the belief that America (White) was destined to expand West to the Pacific Coast (being a superior culture and race).

President Polk did exactly that---expanded the United States to Oregon and to California. The Polk’s returned to Nashville. Perhaps exhausted, James K. Polk died three months after leaving office.

- Kathleen Rabago

Civil War Facts Image Gallery



JUAN MATIAS SANCHEZ
ADOBE MUSEUM
946 ADOBE AVE., MONTEBELLO, CA 90640



Annual Fundraiser
WINE & CHEESE

SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 2017
5:00 P.M.

Historical Costumes
Art Vendors & Auction
Music & Fun!
\$20.00 per person
Event Donations will go to the Adobe's Revitalization

Presented by
MONTEBELLO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
A Non Profit 501(c)(3) Organization

Chris Vargas, President; (323) 819 - 5103 | www.MontebelloHistoricalSociety.org