

From Drawing by Wm. Rich Hutton.

Courtesy of Huntington Library.

FORT MOORE, JULY 10, 1847

Looking from the home of Nathaniel Pryor. Two story house in foreground is Mellus or Bell Row, used by Fremont as his headquarters.

Fort Moore

By BERT H. COCKS

ON JULY 4, 1847, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence was celebrated in Los Angeles for the first time. It is a strange fact that this celebration took place seven months before California became a part of the United States. The treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the war between United States and Mexico, was not signed until February 2, 1848.

Three battles preceded the surrender of Los Angeles to the American forces; the Battle of San Pasqual on December 6, 1846, the Battle of Paso de Bartola on January 8, 1847, and the Battle of La Mesa on the following day.

On January 10, the American forces, totaling 561 officers and men, a combination of soldiers and sailors under General S. W. Kearny, marched into Los Angeles and took possession. From that date on, Mexican authority in California was ended.

General S. W. Kearny was commander of the American forces in California as well as throughout all the Southwest territory. He and his staff decided a fort should be built to give a feeling of security, and it fell to the lot of Major W. H. Emory to select the site and draw the plans. For location he selected the hill back of the Los Angeles Plaza Church, directly over the present Broadway tunnel. Major Emory, no doubt, suggested the name "Fort Moore" in memory of his comrade, Captain Benjamin D. Moore, who was killed in the battle of San Pasqual. In this battle the American forces were opposed by the mounted California Lancers, led by General Andres Pico. Pico's men were short of guns and ammunition but were very skillful fighters with their lances. During the fight Captain Moore was stabbed to death by the thrust of a lance in the hands of one of Andres Pico's cavalymen. In this battle eighteen American soldiers were killed and thirteen wounded out of a force of one hundred men.

On January 12, 1847, the work of building the fort began, but heavy rains interrupted for two days, so Major Emory worked at headquarters on details of the fort. During those rainy days he and his associates enjoyed several bottles of wine from the winery of Don Luis Vignes, the Frenchman. Emory, in his journal, said the wine was "truly delicious" and like the fine wines of Europe. Don Luis also presented them with a great quantity of wonderful grapes and luscious pears.

The building of the fort, however, was interrupted, for it was just a week later that Major Emory received orders to depart at once on horseback for San Diego and embark for Washington, via Panama, to carry dispatches for the war department. General Kearny accompanied him as far as San Luis Rey Mission, where a detachment of the Mormon Battalion was encamped. It was not until two months later that the work on the fort was resumed.

On March 17, 1847, Colonel Philip Cooke and two companies of his Mormon Battalion arrived in Los Angeles from San Luis Rey Mission, Colonel Cooke having been made commander of the Military district of Southern California. Lieutenant J. W. Davidson was also stationed in Los Angeles with two companies of United States Regular Dragoons (Cavalry).

On April 25, a rumor was spread that Mexico had appropriated \$600,000 to arm 1500 men under General Bustamente to retake California. At once a troop of Cavalry was sent to Warners Ranch to watch the Mountain passes, and on that same day work was resumed on the fort. The type of fort built was called a redoubt or earthwork, or in other words a fortification made of earth. In this case it was constructed of adobe, the work being done by the Mormon soldiers under the supervision of Lieutenant Davidson. The rumor about 1500 men from Mexico proved to be unfounded.

The writer is greatly interested in California history and has, for some months past, searched every possible channel in an endeavor to locate the plans of Fort Moore. The old adobe walls were destroyed years ago, and homes have been built where the old fort once stood. Early day settlers, such as Dr. Wills, the Bannings, and others built their homes on the site.

Frank A. Golder's book *The March of the Mormon Battalion*, contains the Journal of Henry Standage, a member of that Battalion, who died in Mesa, Arizona, in 1899. We read this book and Sergeant Daniel Tyler's *Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War*, as well as Major Emory's Journal. We also read Lieutenant J. C. Bonnycastle's program for the day, July 4, 1847, in the record book of the First New York Volunteers Book by Francis D. Clark and in addition communi-

FORT MOORE

cated with the United States War Department regarding the fort.
From the War Department we received the following reply:

WAR DEPARTMENT
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON

October 1, 1938.

Mr. Bert H. Cocks
Los Angeles, California.

Dear Sir:

It appears that Fort Moore, Los Angeles, California, was named in honor of Captain Benjamin D. Moore, Company C, First Dragoons, who was killed in the Battle of San Pasqual, December 6, 1846.

A history of the fort has never been compiled by the War Department and a search of the records of this office, and every available source from which it would be most likely to obtain some additional information, has resulted in the failure to find any record of maps, pictures, or specifications for the construction of the above mentioned fort.

Yours very truly,
E. S. Adams, Major General
The Adjutant General, by H. C. H.

The Huntington Library supplied the accompanying subdivision map of Fort Moore Hill, dated July, 1868, which shows a small trace of Fort Moore. By piecing this out with E. O. C. Ord's survey of 1849, we have a good idea of where the old walls of the fort actually were.

Charles C. Pierce, our historical photographer for Southern California, supplied me with a picture of Fort Moore Hill taken in 1883, with the Banning home in view. To the left of the house the ruin of the old adobe fort is shown. Just below the wall are four men on horseback. These proportions would indicate that the wall was at least sixteen feet high. A road up a steep grade from Temple Street also passed in front of the fort.

In the Archives in the Los Angeles Hall of Records, the plan of the fort was discovered on an old E. O. C. Ord Survey Map of Los Angeles, dated August 29, 1849, and a copy of it accompanies this article.

The accompanying drawing by William R. Hutton, dated July 10, 1847, shows Fort Moore on the hill. Hutton was a U. S. Army paymaster, was Ord's assistant, and drew the survey map of Los Angeles in 1849.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Fort Moore was big—Ord's survey shows that it was 429 feet across the front which faced the Plaza, and 297 feet from front to rear.

Regarding the building of the fort and its dedications, the following quotations are taken from the Journal of Henry Standage, Company E, Mormon Battalion, published by Frank Golder in his book, *The March of the Mormon Battalion*.

"April 7, 1847. Stood guard over the cannon, two pieces being brought from San Gabriel Mission which had been in charge of Colonel Freemont's men, their time being about out.

"April 8. This morning the teams were sent for more cannon to San Gabriel Mission; seven pieces were brought. Drills.

"April 25. Company A, Mormon Battalion, commenced building a fort.

"April 26. Company E camped on Hill where Company A was building the fort. (Standage belonged to Company E.)

"April 28, 1847. Received orders to work on the ditch and assist in building the fort.

"May 10, 1847. Today General Kearny arrived at Pueblo and a salute of 21 guns fired. Colonel Stevenson and others came with him. Troops Expected.

"May 12. One hundred New York Volunteers came in from Monterey.

"May 14. Colonel Cooke and General Kearny departed for Monterey by boat, leaving Colonel J. B. Stevenson, New York Volunteers, in charge.

"June 18. Detail returned from mountains with Liberty poles; two large pine logs, each seventy feet long."

Historian J. M. Guinn says these two poles were seventy-five and ninety feet long, respectively, and were spliced together, and erected in the fort to make a flag pole 150 feet high. They were hauled from the San Bernardino Mountains on ox-carts drawn by forty yoke of oxen owned by Juan Ramirez.

"June 19. Detailed to work on ditch until noon, mix mud."

In many places in his Journal are records by Standage stating that he mixed mud and assisted in building the fort.

"July 4, 1847. Independence. This day was celebrated by the

FORT MOORE

troops at Pueblo de Los Angeles. The ceremonies of the day were as follows:— The whole command under Colonel Stevenson (comprising First Regular United States Dragoons, Mormon Battalion, and New York Volunteers, 700 soldiers) were paraded within the fort at sunrise. Tune by the New York Band, *Star Spangled Banner*, while the colors were being raised (by Lieutenant J. W. Davidson) and after they were raised, nine cheers were given by the soldiers. Tune, *Hail Columbia*. Federal salute of thirteen guns fired by the First Dragoons. The Companies were then marched back to their quarters. Then at 11 A. M. the command were again called out under arms. Regimented Band. Parade within the fort and many of the Spaniards and Indians were present also. Ceremonies conducted by the reading of the Declaration of Independence by Lieutenant Stoneman of the First Dragoons. Tune, *Hail Columbia* by New York Band. A short address by Colonel Stevenson and the name 'Fort Moore' given to the fort at Ciudad de Los Angeles.

"Band played *Yankee Doodle*. Patriotic song by Levi Hancock of the Mormon Battalion. Tune, a march, by the band. An offer made to the Spaniards to have the Declaration read in their language, if desired; not read. Wine was then passed around to the soldiers, who then marched to quarters."

Historian Guinn says, "The Declaration of Independence was read in Spanish by Mayor Stephen Foster. The day's festivities ended with a fandango and shouts of 'Viva Los Estados Unidos'—Long Live The United States."

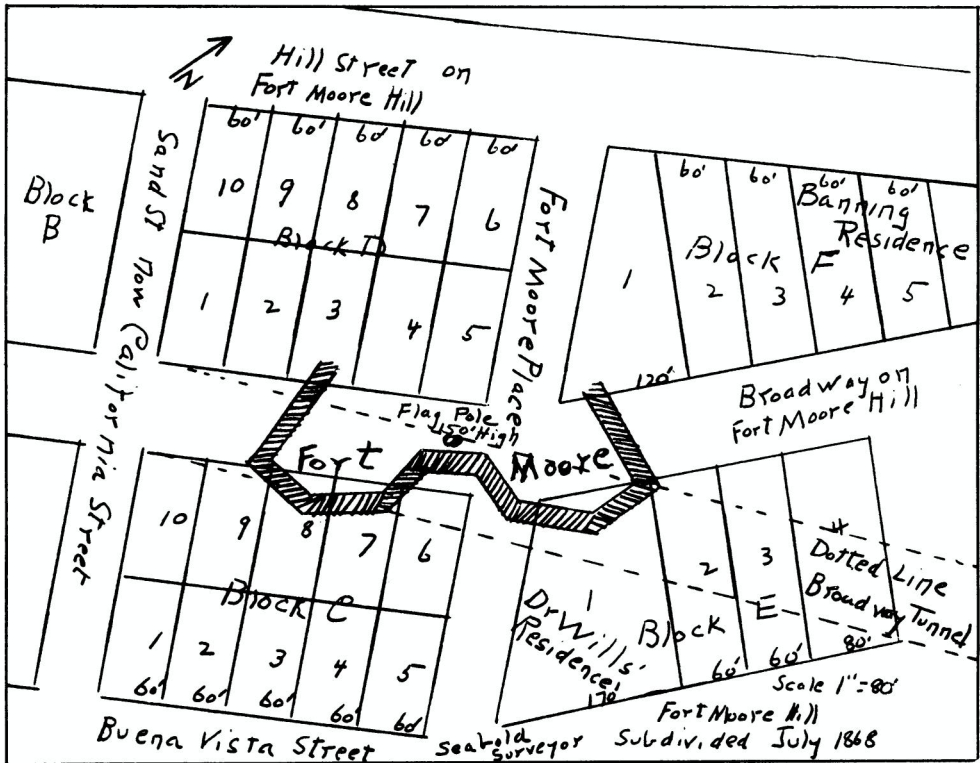
"July 9. No work on the fort these days.

"July 15. Today is the last day of the service of the United States. Much rejoicing.

"July 16, 1847. Lieutenant A. J. Smith, Company C, First Dragoons, Mustered us out of service, the entire Mormon Battalion, by saying, 'You are discharged.'"

With the mustering-out of the Mormon Battalion the work ceased, and the fort was left incomplete. Across the back of the fort was a small opening where the adobe wall had not been built.

In 1853 a group of men from the War Department carefully inspected the Pacific Coast and selected certain locations where it seemed best to maintain forts. This group decided that a fort in Los Angeles was unnecessary and as a consequence Fort Moore was abandoned.



EVENTS OF IMPORTANCE AT FORT MOORE

- May 10, 1847. Today General S. W. Kearny arrived at Pueblo of Los Angeles—21 Gun Salute fired from Fort Moore.
- July 4, 1847. At sunrise—Federal Salute of 13 Guns fired by Men of the First Dragoons starting Independence Day Programme at Fort Moore.
- June 9, 1860. Governor John G. Downey and wife arrived in Los Angeles—13 Guns fired in salute from Fort Moore Hill.
- July 18, 1860. General John C. Fremont visited Los Angeles and was greeted by a salute of 15 Guns from Fort Moore Hill.
- June 9, 1945. General George S. Patton Jr. and Lieutenant General James Doolittle returned home today from the European War Theatre. When the parade, in their honor, came to its destination at 3:00 P. M. in front of the City Hall—3 inch guns, mounted atop historic Fort Moore Hill, boomed out a 17 Gun Salute.

FORT MOORE

CAPTAIN BENJAMIN DAVIESS MOORE

CAPTAIN Benjamin Daviess Moore (for whom Fort Moore, Los Angeles, was named) was born in Paris, Kentucky, September 10, 1810. His father died in 1820, so the mother with her ten year old boy, Benjamin, went to Shelbyville, Illinois, where lived her two sons by a former marriage. One of these sons became Captain Matthew Duncan of the U. S. Army, and the other, Joseph Duncan, became Governor of Illinois.

In 1828, at the age of 18, Benjamin was appointed midshipman in the U. S. Navy. In 1832, the year of the Black Hawk Indian uprising, he resigned from the navy to become First Lieutenant in the Mounted Rangers, U. S. Army, under Captain Matthew Duncan, his half brother. The militia was being mobilized for an attack on Chief Black Hawk and his Sac Indian Warriors. Lieutenant Moore and five others were selected for scout duty. The scouting resulted in the discovery that Chief Black Hawk was recruiting from other Indian tribes.

The soldiers were cautious and built a series of forts which were made of logs twelve feet high planted upright with picket tops. They built twelve of these forts a few miles apart at strategic points and carried on their activities with this much-needed protection. Throughout the summer the Mounted Rangers gradually gained the upper hand and finally the Indians were defeated at the Battle of Bad Axe, and Chief Black Hawk was taken prisoner but released soon afterwards.

In 1833 the First U. S. Cavalry of Dragoons was organized by Congress, with S. W. Kearny as Lieutenant Colonel and Benjamin Moore as Captain of Company C. In 1839 Captain Moore married Martha Hughes, daughter of Judge Matthew Hughes of Illinois. Four years later Martha died from cold and exposure on a winter's march from Fort Gibson to Fort Leavenworth. A son and a daughter had been born to them. The son Matthew Joseph Moore was born May 7, 1840, and died in California March 17, 1918. The daughter died in infancy.

On May 13, 1846, war was declared on Mexico by the United States. On June 30 of that same year Lieutenant Colonel S. W. Kearny was appointed Brigadier General and placed in command of the Army of the West, with orders to proceed to California. Captain Moore was also included. After conquering New Mexico, Kearny and his men started for California from Santa Fe on September 26, 1846. At Socorro they met Kit Carson and party who

were returning from California with documents for the War Department at Washington. He had been sent by Colonel Fremont, the documents stating that "California has surrendered without a blow and the American flag floats in every Port." This message caused General Kearny to reduce his California force which he did by sending several companies of Dragoons back East and into Texas. On October 7, General Kearny started West from Socorro with 100 Dragoons, U. S. Cavalry, which included Company C commanded by Captain Benjamin Moore.

For guides and hunters they had Kit Carson, Rubideaux, Stanley, and Warner. General Kearny had persuaded Kit Carson to turn his documents over to Major Sumner to be delivered to the War Department. This was a big sacrifice for Carson who lived in Santa Fe, just 200 miles distant, for he had already been away from his family for two years. However, he turned about face and led the Dragoons back to California.

Continuing west the Dragoons followed the Gila River to where it empties into the Colorado River, arriving there November 23. The town of Yuma is now located at this point. It was on November 25 when the Dragoons, led by Kit Carson, forded the Colorado River to the California side. Having now arrived in California, they had the Great Imperial Desert to cross before reaching the mountains and then the mountains to cross before reaching the inhabited part where San Diego, Los Angeles, and the great Mexican cattle ranches were located.

The Dragoons, officers, men, scouts, and hunters totaled 100 men with 250 horses and mules, and it was no small task for them to cross this desert with water holes 60 miles apart. Four days later they arrived at Carisso Gorge, their horses jaded, and they were practically without food. Their clothes were torn, some almost naked and many were barefoot. They climbed up through barren Carisso Gorge, and on December 1 camped at San Felipe, arriving the following day at Colonel J. J. Warner's ranch. They were now 60 miles from San Diego and 80 miles from Los Angeles. The weather was cold and rainy, and by the time they reached Warner's Adobe Ranch House they were chilled to the marrow. Three days later they rode on, in a cold, drenching rain, to Santa Maria ranch. By this time much of their powder was wet.

At the Santa Maria Ranch they were met by Captain Gillispie, accompanied by 35 soldiers and sailors from San Diego, with a message for General Kearny defining to him the location of the enemy. The enemy proved to be General Andres Pico and 160 Californians, all well-trained cavalrymen. Pico's men were camped just nine miles

FORT MOORE

away and a hundred more of them were on their way and just one day's journey off.

On December 6, 1846, the Battle of San Pasqual took place. The Dragoons were up at 2 A. M., making the nine miles by daybreak. Captain Johnston was leading with an advance guard of twelve men. He ordered a trot, then a charge, and the Dragoons found themselves engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with a largely superior force. Captain Moore with 50 Dragoons, mounted on tired horses, followed Captain Johnston into the battle. They routed the Californians, driving them back for a short distance, then the Californians called a halt, wheeled their horses about-face and viciously charged the U. S. Troops. The Californians had very little in the way of fire arms, but were mounted on fine horses. They all carried lances and were well trained in the art of using them. They were all expert lancers.

The Californians were again driven back, but during the battle eighteen American soldiers were killed and thirteen wounded. Captain Moore and his brother-in-law (Lieutenant Hammond), also Captain A. Johnston and fifteen privates were stabbed to death. Moore and Hammond had married the Hughes sisters in Illinois.

In Major Emory's Journal it is recorded, "Toward evening the bodies of the dead were buried under a willow on the battle ground, and thus were put to rest together, and forever, a band of brave and heroic men."

Judge Benjamin Hayes (first judge in Los Angeles in the 1850's) was a personal friend of Captain Moore and Lieutenant Hammond back in Missouri. In Judge Hayes' diaries, together with the editor's footnotes, we have the following: "The American dead were buried on the San Pasqual Battle Field where the bodies remained for several years. They were then removed to Old Town, San Diego, to the Government Graveyard. Captain Johnston's body was later removed and sent back East to relatives. In the Government Graveyard the bodies of Moore, Hammond and Johnston were placed in separate graves, while the fifteen other soldiers were all placed in one grave.

"In 1885 all were removed to the Post Cemetery at Fort Rosecrans, Point Loma. Captain Moore and Lieutenant Hammond were buried under headstones bearing their names. The 15 soldiers placed in one grave was marked, '15 U. S. Soldiers'—no names listed. On July 30, 1922 the Native Sons and Daughters of San Diego placed a granite boulder, from the battlefield, on the latter grave, with a bronze tablet bearing the names of those who fell at San Pasqual."

On Sept. 18, 1856 Judge Benjamin Hayes wrote in his diary at San Diego where he visited the graves: "How welcome was he (Moore) ever in the circle of Emily (Mrs. Benjamin Hayes) and her

sisters! I have seen him in the social party, at the festive board. I knew him in private life. Among the hardy pioneers of the frontier, no officer could be more popular, always kind and genial, in his lighter mood, the spirit of joviality and humor. Stern and prompt and faithful when duty compelled. He was beloved by his men, and took great pride in his company."

With the death of Captain Moore at the Battle of San Pasqual on December 6, 1846, and the death of his wife, Martha, three years earlier, we lost two brave people who definitely helped to conquer the West. This young couple made the supreme sacrifice. They gave their lives for their country.

Just a few months later the U. S. Government honored his memory by naming the fort on the hill above the Plaza of the Pueblo of Los Angeles "Fort Moore." They recognized his worth, not only as a soldier, but as a man of sterling character, with a strict sense of honor and duty to his country and his family. This last very definitely is shown in a letter written to his father-in-law just before leaving for California only a few weeks before his death:

"Santa Fe, New Mexico
September 16, 1846.

The Hon. Judge Matthew Hughes

My Dear Father,

The Express leaves for the United States in one hour, so you must excuse a short letter. The people, so far, seem to be well pleased with their new government; how long it will continue, time will show. All the Dragoons (Cavalry) leave here the 25th with General Kearny for California.

We have a march before us of 1300 or 1400 miles and almost a desert from the beginning to the end of the journey. From all accounts it is a very severe trip on account of the scarcity of water, grass and game.

I told General Kearny that if my company was to be stationed in California I would not stay; I would resign. I told him I would not be separated from my children longer than the war continued—that they were of greater consideration to me than a commission, of any grade, in the army, could be.

Affectionately,
B. D. Moore"

Mrs. Helen Moore Alexander, on the staff of the Los Angeles Public Library, in the History Department, is a grand-daughter of Captain Benjamin D. Moore.