

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

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The Monterey History and Art Association

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JUNE, 1963

The Veritable Squibob Visits Monterey

Scarcely anyone today remembers Captain George H. Derby, U.S.A., better known in his day by his pen names; John Phoenix, Esq., Squibob, John P. Tarbox, Dr. Herman Ellenbogen, etc. Yet he was recognized by Thackeray, Mark Twain, W.D. Howells and Theodore Roosevelt as the outstanding humorist and wit of California in the 1840's and 1850's.

Derby has been likened to James Thurber. "They were equally good at drawing and writing . . . and masters of burlesque based upon keen intellectual appreciation," say George R. Stewart in his biography of Derby. The humor of both is urbane, largely topical, heavy with puns and distortions of literary allusions, and tied so closely to the local scene and ephemeral conditions that its satire becomes very quickly dated and incomprehensible.

Most of Derby's writing was done in a spirit of fun for the newspapers and magazines of San Francisco. His real duties as an army engineer took him all over California, from the Colorado through the interior valleys and into Oregon. Monterey was his official base in 1849-50, but San Francisco was his true home until 1856. We re-print from his fabulously successful book, *Phoenixiana*, (1856) which went through twenty-six editions before 1890, his only reference to Monterey, a visit made in August, 1853.

Poor Derby; eyesight failing and health gone, he died in Washington D.C. in 1861, and today his sallies and practical jokes which tickled the ribs of all literate Americans, and especially Californians, lie forgotten.

August 10, 1853

... Away we sped down the bay, the captain standing on the wheel-house directing our course. "Port, Port a little, Port," he shouted. "What's he a-calling for", inquired a youth of good-natured but unmistakable verdancy of appearance, of me. "Port wine," said I, "and the storekeeper don't hear him; you'd better take him up some." "I will," said Innocence; "I've got a bottle of first rate in my stateroom." And he did, but soon returned with a particularly

crest-fallen and sheepish appearance. "Well, what did he say to you?" inquired I. "Pointed at the notice on that tin, *Passengers not allowed on the wheel-house*," said the poor fellow. "He is, though, ain't he?" added my friend with a faint attempt at a smile, as the captain in an awful voice shouted, "Star-board!" "Is what?" said I. "*Loud on the wheel-house!*" Good God! I went below.

At 9 o'clock in the evening we arrived at Monterey, where our modest salute was answered by the thundering response of a 24-pounder from the fort. This useful defensive work, which mounts some twenty heavy guns and contains quarters for a regiment, was built in 1848 by Halleck, Peachy and Billings. (*1) It is now used as a hermitage by a lonely officer of the U.S. Army. The people of Monterey have a wild legend concerning this desolate recluse. I was told that he passes the whole of his time in sleep, never by any chance getting out of bed until he hears the gun of a steamer, when he rushes forth in his shirt, fires off a 24-pounder, sponges and reloads it, takes a drink and turns in again. They have never seen him; it is only by his *semi-monthly reports* they know of his existence.

"Well," said I to my informant, a bustling little fellow named Bootjacks, (*2) who came off on board of us," suppose, some day a steamer should arrive and he should not return her gun?"

"Well, sir," replied Bootjacks, with a quaint smile. "we should conclude that he was either dead, *or out of powder*." Logical deduction this, and a rather curious story, altogether; how I should like to see him! Bootjacks kindly presented me with the following state of the markets, etc. in Monterey, which will give you a better idea of the large business and commercial prosperity of that flourishing city, than anything that I can write on these subjects.

MONTEREY MARKETS

The arrival of a stranger by the *Maj. Tompkins* (*3) from San Francisco during the past week with specie to the amount of \$4.87 1/2, most of which has been put in circulation, has produced an unprecedented activity among our business men. Confidence is in a great measure restored, and our merchants have had no reason to complain of want of occupation. The following is the state of our market for the principal articles of domestic consumption:

FLOUR — Twenty-five pounds, imported by Boston & Co. (*4) per the *Maj. Tompkins*, still in first hands; flour in small quantities is jobbing readily at 15 to 18c per lb. We notice sales of 10 lbs Boston & Co. to Judge Merritt (*5) on private terms.

(*1) Halleck, Henry W. came to Monterey in 1847 as lieutenant of engineers to inspect fortifications. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention in 1849; inspector of Pacific Coast lighthouses, then resigned from army, was senior member of law firm of Halleck, Peachy and Billings, in S. F. Later Civil War Union general.

(*2) Probably a playful name for David Jacks, the enterprising young Scot who came to Monterey in 1849, worked first as a clerk in Boston's store, and later became the largest landholder in Monterey County.

(*3) Irreverently called **Pumpkins**. She was a little coastal steamer on the Sacramento River, San Francisco to San Diego run from 1850 to 1854. Built in Philadelphia in 1847, she was taken north for the mail run in Puget Sound in 1854 and six months later, February 25, 1855, she was wrecked at the entrance to Victoria harbor, Vancouver Island. By "little", I mean **little**: 97 feet long, 23 feet beam, drawing 7 feet 5 inches loaded.

(*4) Joseph Boston, Jr. was a prominent merchant of Monterey in the 1850's. His store is now the State Historical Monument called the *Casa de Oro*, behind the Pacific Building.

(*5) First American judge in Monterey County, 1850 - 54. His home, the charming little adobe on Pacific near Franklin, still stands.

PORK — The half-barrel imported by Col. Russell (*6) in March last, is nearly all in the hands of jobbers; sales of 4 lbs at \$1, half cash, remainder in note at 4 months. A half-barrel expected by Bootjack & Co. early in September, will overstock the market.

CANDY — Sales of 6 sticks by Boston & Co. to the purser of the *Maj. Tompkins*, on private terms; the market has a downward tendency; candy is jobbing in sticks at 6 to 8c.

POTATOES — We notice arrival of 10 lbs from Santa Cruz; no sales.

DRY GOODS — Sales of two cotton pocket handkerchiefs by McKinley & Co. (*7) at 62 1/2 to 75c; endorsed note at 6 months.

Lively place this. Thank heaven my lot is not cast there,—it was once, but the people sold it for taxes. Having taken on board the U.S. Mail, containing one letter (which I believe must have been the resignation of the Collector), our noble steamer bore away to the Southward.

Un Cuento De La Abuelita

(These are little stories of the old-timers, which, as they come to mind, we pass on to you. Of such *historietas* is history made.)

Up until a few years ago, before it fell before the bulldozers to make a parking lot, the last bull-and-bear pit in California stood behind the also-razed Castro Abode on the corner of Pearl and Tyler Streets. To this arena the intrepid vaqueros of the Mexican ranchos used to bring the ferocious monster grizzly bears that they had lassoed with many a wild shout and daring feat of horsemanship, and set the chained beast to deadly combat against an enraged wild bull from the backlands. However brutal and barbarous this may seem to us today, it was a sport in which men, unarmed except for twisted lengths of rawhide cord, pitted themselves against the quickest, strongest and most lethal animal in the Americas and emerged generally unscratched because of their superlative skill in managing their steeds. An unlucky caballero paid for a mistake with his life.

In 1960 we published two articles describing in detail from unpublished sources the manner of capturing and transporting the grizzly bears during the days of the *doms*. Today we have the privilege of adding to those accounts the following charmingly told reminiscences of a grandmother who was born a Boronda in old Monterey.

Some years ago, Mrs. Emelie Elkinton, then curator of the Pacific Building, passed a pleasant afternoon chatting with a visitor from Ventura, Mrs. Catalina Boronda Sattler, who had returned to Monterey to recollect the scenes of her childhood. Her visits to the Custom House, the Stevenson House and other old Adobes reminded her of the stories she had heard as a child, and when she went back to Ventura she mailed up a copy of a letter she had written several years before to her grandson, Jeffrey Jack Willett. We have her permission to publish it.

"My dear little grandson:

You have asked me for another bear story. I have told you about the Three Bears and little Golden Locks, and other bear stories so many times that

(*6) Col. William H. Russell—emigrant train leader, crony of Fremont's, politician, port collector at Monterey from 1851 (?) to May, 1853 when Isaac Wall succeeded him.

(*7) A Scotch boy who jumped ship in Santa Barbara in 1824, married Amesti's daughter, had stores in San Francisco and Monterey and big land interests.

I think I will tell you of men and bears of the early days here in California. The man I am telling you about was a native son, like you, born in California early, in March, 1808.

... Every Spanish *ranchero* was a splendid horseman, as their chief occupation was cattle raising, like your Daddy. So to protect themselves and their animals they used the *reata* for many purposes ...

Bull and bear fighting was the most popular sport. It was held in a large corral made of large logs for posts, stuck in the ground four feet so as to make the fence very strong, and sometimes the top of the fence was 8 or 10 feet high. On one side, usually the side most of the breeze came from, was the grandstand where all the spectators sat ... On the other side were the corrals where the horses, bulls and bears were kept in different sections.

Sometimes it was quite hard to catch a bear, as they were quite clever. The country was very wild and brushy at that time, and people had to be on their guard so the bears wouldn't surprise them while riding about. There was one man of Spanish descent who was very famous throughout the country for his horsemanship and bear-catching. He was a very large man, weighing about 250 pounds and he was six feet tall, so it took a good big horse to carry him around. He was an expert with the *reata*. He was also the first licensed bear catcher in the State.

The way he caught bears was to kill an old cow, and drag portions of it around where there were bears, but in the open near brush, trees and especially willows. Then in the evening he and two or three of his *vaqueros* would ride into the willows on their best trained horses and wait for the bears. They were very careful that the breeze was blowing toward them from the place where the meat was left. That was so that their scent wouldn't frighten the bears. When a bear was real busy eating the meat, the men would gallop as fast as the horses could go and would lass the bear. This Californian man called "Chevo" would lass the bear by the neck, another man would lass the hind leg, (just like the men do with the steers that you have seen at your Daddy's rodeos). Another man would get down off his horse and tie one front foot to the opposite hind foot, quite short. That way the bear could stand up but couldn't go very far, otherwise if they left him lying down he would soon die.

Next morning they would come with a *carreta*, load the bear in, standing up, tie him well so that he couldn't jump out, and take him to Monterey and put him in the bear pen. That way he was not hurt or tired.

Sometimes this bear catcher couldn't get a wild bear for the show, but he didn't mind as he had a very large she-bear that he kept in an enclosure on his rancho, tied with a chain to a large and strong post in the center of the pen. Her name was *La Reina*, which means The Queen. When he needed her, she was put in a *carreta* and taken to Monterey to fight the bull. You know, Jeff, one bear looks very much like another, so the people didn't know what bear was to fight. As *La Reina* was large, strong and mean, she could kill a bull very easily, and she would wait on her hind legs until the bull came just so close to her, with his head down. She would catch him around the neck with her arms and bite him in a tender spot behind an ear. All this time, which didn't take long, *La Reina* was also hugging the bull to death.

In those days people gambled the same as they do now, and put their

money on any sport, especially bullfights. As "Chevo", who owned *La Reina*, just knew she would win, he would bet heavily on her and win. Once he won a very beautiful silver-mounted saddle, which was very rare in those days. He also won a lot of money and honor for his bravery and skill and excellent horsemanship.

After the fight, which was usually held in the early afternoon, there was visiting, merry-making, barbequeing and dancing until early next morning. Everybody would be very tired, go home, rest and wait until the next celebration. Life was interesting and pleasant in those days for the Spaniards, as the poor Indians did the work. No worry, no heart attacks.

I don't know what became of *La Reina* finally.
My dear Jeff, do you know who that famous bear catcher was? He was your great-great-grandfather, Eusuvio Boronda.

From your grandma
Catalina Boronda Sattler"

(The Casa Boronda, the oldest house in Monterey, and probably the oldest adobe dwelling in California, was built in 1817 by Manuel Boronda on what is now known as the "Mesa". It was built on slightly sloping ground above the tule marshes of the Estero, so that the original three-rooms are now each a step lower than the other. It was first thatched with tules tied on with rawhide thongs, and there is a family story that when the March winds howled down the canyon, threatening to tear off the roof, the whole family "would prostrate themselves on the floor and chorus a prayer that the leather thongs would hold fast."

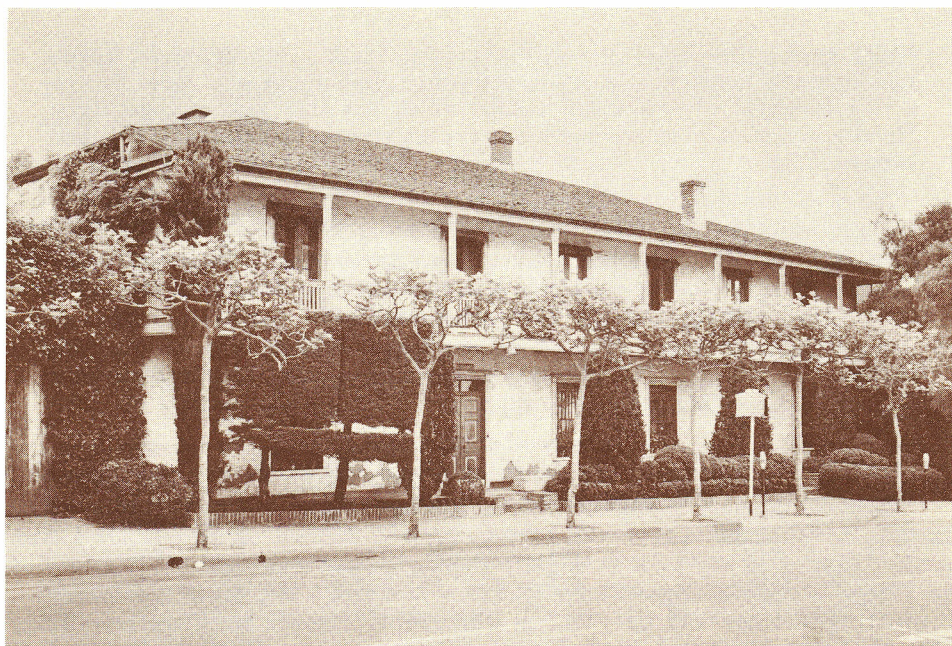
Manuel Boronda was a retired soldier when he built the adobe and to supplement his income he opened the first private school in Monterey. It was for boys only, as indeed the first public schools established by the Spaniards at the four presidios of San Diego, Santa Barbara, Monterey and San Francisco and the pueblo of San Jose in 1794-95 had been. These were the famous schools where, because writing material was so scarce, the scholars were issued the paper for making cartridges from the presidio arsenals on condition that all writing was neatly erased, the wrinkles smoothed out and the paper returned intact to the storehouse.

Don Jose Eusebio Boronda, the "Chevo" of the *historieta*, had received large grants of land near Salinas and Monterey, and was still living in 1877 when the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft sent a stenographer to take down his reminiscences. Don Eusebio loved his land and cattle and lived by strong religious principles.

A remarkable story of him has come down through the family of his sister Petra Boronda. One time when Don Eusebio was in his late sixties, he gave a fiesta at his rancho to celebrate the capture of a fierce grizzly that had been killing his stock. The bear killed three bulls in succession, and after the third kill, Don Eusebio's sons had thrown their *reatas* and were holding the bear for further orders before another bull was brought into the ring.

Suddenly Don Eusebio jumped down into the ring on foot, pulled his long knife from his boot top, turned to his sons and said, "There has been enough killing of good stock. Release the bear!" The sons looked in amazement at their mother, hoping that she would stop her husband, but she nodded in agreement. So the sons pulled off their *reatas* from the bear which promptly turned to charge the human in its way.

Don Eusebio stood firm with arm outstretched, dagger steady. His hand and part of his arm seemed to disappear into the charging bear's mouth. The bear fell dead, and Don Eusebio calmly walked away, calling for the fiesta to start.)



Courtesy Monterey Public Library

In the March issue, by accident the wrong illustration was placed over the right description (or vice-versa) of the famous Amesti Adobe. The picture you saw then was taken from the back of the building about 1917, and shows the sad dilapidation of the noble structure before Mr. and Mrs. Elkins bought it and set about its rejuvenation.

The above photograph of the front of the adobe was taken about 1955, after Frances Elkins had brought it to its present beautiful state. This is the view seen today from the street before the main entrance.

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

Mrs. Charles Bentley, the Adobe House Tour chairman for 1963, reports that all is in readiness. On August 10th there will be nine houses not usually open to the public graciously opened by their owners for the pleasure of the guests that day.

The theme for this year's tour is **La Novia**, the bride, suggested by the diarama in the Copper Cup Room at the U.S. Naval Post-Graduate School, executed by the late Jo Mora, one of the peninsula's most famous artists. The table settings will depict the engagement announcement, bride's parties, bachelor dinner, rehearsal dinner, wedding dinner, bridal reception and breakfast for two.

The adobes and their hostesses are **Casa Amesti**, Mrs. W. E. van Loben Sels; **Casa Abrego**, where Mrs. Horace Dormody will set a table and decorate; **Casa de la Torre**, owner, Mrs. Wilma Ostrander, where Mrs. Henry Jones will present a decorated table; **First Federal Court**, Mesdames L. J. Hudson and Mrs. Thomson Hudson, tablesetting and hostesses; **Old Whaling Station**, Mrs. Wesley Dodge and Mrs. L. J. Hudson, hostesses, **Casa Soberanes**, Mrs. W. M. O'Donnell and Mrs. Burton Stubbs; **Casa Serrano**, Mrs. Tod Singleton as hostess and Virginia Stanton setting the table; **Larkin House**, Mrs. George Leutzinger, tablesetting and the **House of the Four Winds**, Mrs. Dan King, III, tablesetting.

Mrs. Bentley and her committees are working enthusiastically to make this year's tour as successful as all other past tours have been. We should thank all the committee members, the hostesses and the home-owners for their time and generosity, as well as the officers and directors of the Association. It is not easy to plan and carry to a finish such an important event.

The committee chairmen are Mrs. Robert Stanton, table-setting consultant; tickets, Mrs. Marion Eley, with Mrs. Donald A. Renner and Mrs. Rudolph ver Mehr; hostesses, Mrs. Mark Thomas; tea, Mrs. Norman P. Hasselo; transportation, Mrs. Robert Johnson; directory, Mrs. Frank LaCauza; printing, Mrs. Jane Campbell and Mrs. William Oberholtzer; and publicity, Mrs. Howard Dabney.

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Membership dues in the Monterey History and Art Association are \$4 single, \$7 for husband and

COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

wife, \$1 junior membership, \$10 sustaining and \$100 life membership. Dues are payable from January 1st to January 1st each year.

Since the last issue of this **Noticias**, the following new members have been admitted to membership: Dr. Clyn Smith, Jr., Mrs. R. A. Fisichella, Miss Laura W. Dyrigin, Major and Mrs. Richard C. Worden, Mrs. Maria Daly, Mrs. Mabel Norwood, Mr. and Mrs. A. H. G. Cooper, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Ramsey, Mr. and Mrs. Burton Stubbs, Mrs. Alice B. Hughes, Miss Henrietta Moffath, Mrs. Jefferson Doolittle, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas A. Graham, Dr. and Mrs. E. Walter Anderson, Mrs. Ruby Underwood, Mrs. Esther Crank, Mrs. Thornton W. Allen, Mrs. Anthony Bruyaux, the Reverend and Mrs. David Hill, Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Allen, Captain and Mrs. Charles Crombe, Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Millard and Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Emery.

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Carmel Martin, Sr. has presented us a hand gun said to have been carried by General John C. Fremont, and a saber and scabbard of the same vintage. The items are to be mounted and placed on exhibition in the **Fremont Headquarters Adobe**, now the office of the Monterey Realty Board but open to the public.

Mrs. Norman Hasselo has given a beautiful childhood doll and its original clothes plus a doll bed, two very old silver spoons, a handmade card case with very fine needle work and cross-stitch and other articles. Mrs. Ray Rudolph presented a sewing machine of early times. Mr. and Mrs. J. William MacLennan have presented a painting of the cathedral in Palma de Mallorca, near Father Serra's birthplace; Mrs. Helen G. Small has given two old photographs of a function held in Monterey, probably in 1896 for the 50th anniversary parade celebrating California's capture by the U.S. Mrs. R. R. Wallace gave a copy of the **Political Code of California** used by the judge of the Superior Court in Monterey many years ago.

Mrs. Peter Farmer designed and hand-printed a short history of the Casa Serrano which has been framed in gold by Myron Oliver and hung to the right of the full length mirror near the entrance to the large sala. This kind donation is a work of art and will be a great help to the hostesses and members and guests who visit our clubroom. We thank Mrs. Farmer for using her talents for the benefit of the Association.

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Several memorials have been given for the garden fund at the Casa Serrano in memory of Elmer Zanetta, Tom Work, Colonel Van Court Warren, Mrs. Lorraine Miller Remington, (the mother of Mrs. Frank LaCauza), and Arthur Devlin. The Association also maintains a Book of Remembrance on view at the Casa Serrano. This handsome volume was given by Mrs. George Applegarth of San Francisco in memory of her mother, Mrs. Laura Bride Powers, whose inspiration brought about the organization of the Monterey History and Art Association in 1930.

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At the June meeting, the Directors, on the proposal of Colonel Griffin, sent a resolution of gratitude on behalf of the Monterey History and Art Association to Mayor George Clemons for his full co-operation and to the City of Monterey for its assistance in putting on the Merienda. Letters of appreciation were sent to Mr. George Wise of the Monterey County Fair and to all those who kindly and generously furnished food and beverages for the event. We are truly very grateful.

Since our March issue, the Board of Directors has continued hard at work on the normal business and committees and arrangements for the big summer activities: the Merienda, the Sloat Landing ceremony (which has run into difficulties lately because participation by the naval vessels has been in conflict with other demands on their calendar. There will, however, be an observance of this important historic event, even if it is less spectacular than in previous years), the Annual Adobe House Tour and various teas and parties for the membership.

Mrs. O'Donnell's request that \$350 be spent for necessary improvements to the kitchen area in the Casa Serrano was approved. Mr. Joe Fratessa donated his services as contractor and supervisor. The worn and loose threshold at the main door was also replaced with a sturdy oak slab under the eye of Mr. Faw.

After investigation by a committee headed by Mrs. L. J. Hudson, it was reported with regret that the interesting old wooden building known as the Birks Key Shop could not be moved properly to another location. The Directors, however, are keeping a very watchful eye on the development of the Urban Renewal project. Upon hearing of a rumor that the **Old Whaling Station** and **First Brick House** are threatened, they have invited Dr. Arnold Manor, Chairman, and Mr. Arthur Chang, Director of Urban Renewal, to attend the July meeting of our board so that misapprehensions might be cleared up.

The Directors approved a resolution presented by Mrs. Singleton which requested the Monterey City Council to defer construction of buildings on the waterfront until a planning survey ordered by the city had been accepted and studied. (The city council at its next meeting did defer action). At the same meeting, alerted by Mr. Knight, the Directors ordered letters sent to various state and federal agencies and committee heads, and to Senator Fred Farr and Assemblyman Alan Pattee, endorsing continuance of efforts to preserve 30 acres of the historic Benicia Arsenal grounds which have been offered for sale.

THE EDITORS
MONTEREY HISTORY
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COSAS DE INTERES PARA LOS SOCIOS

Mr. Richard Garrod, Planning Director of the City of Monterey, was introduced by Mr. Coons at a subsequent meeting. Mr. Garrod presented a proposal to re-align Pearl Street so that it would join Jefferson at Calle Principal. It appeared that the historic **Alvarado Adobe**, a perfectly preserved two-story building, might be severely damaged in the process, and the Directors strongly objected to any such encroachment. They recommended that further study of the proposed project should be made to eliminate this threat to one of the key structures in the Island of Adobes Plan.

The Association's project for a Monterey Harbor Marker is almost completed. The base has been laid with the cooperation of the city, the stone work, of the same rock used in the construction of the ancient mission and chapel, will be done by Mr. Joe De Maria under the supervision of Mr. Myron Oliver, and Bruton sisters' and the unique and strikingly beautiful plaque with the description written by Tal Josselyn is all in readiness. The dedication will probably take place late in July.

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The Merienda marking Monterey's 193rd birthday was an outstanding success. For the first time in about two weeks in a cold and dark summer, the sun burst through the over-cast and brilliantly shone upon a festive scene. Ted Durein, in **sombrero, sarape** and **botella**, made an inimitable master of ceremonies and had the singular honor of presenting his daughter, Donna, as the lovely **Favorita**. Miss Durein gave a graceful little speech of welcome in Spanish and presented her **Duena** and attendants. Padre Lawrence Farrell gave the benediction. Vividly colorful Spanish dancing to the music of John Thompson's flamenco guitar was presented for the enjoyment of the 500 guests. Manuel Campos and his **mariachis** strolled and sang among the beautifully decorated tables, each of which had been arranged by its individual hostess. Our president, Henry Jones, introduced the honored guests, and at the long bar-becue tables, many of the directors presided over the piping hot steaks, sauce, beans, salad and other good things.

It was a special occasion for good-fellowship, warmed by the sun and the wine of old California.

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Claude Faw has taken some beautiful colored slides of the Merienda and will show them later at a membership meeting.

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Mrs. E. D. Post has a beautiful, moderately old Spanish shawl, black with red roses, in excellent condition that needs an appreciative home. Anyone interested in buying this fine piece should call Mrs. Post at FR 5-8362.