

NOTICIAS del PUERTO de MONTEREY

A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by
The Monterey History and Art Association

Contents copyright 1985 by Monterey History and Art Association

Member: National Trust for Historic Preservation

California Historical Society – Conference of California Historical Societies

Vol. XXVI, No. 2

June, 1985



Postcard by Britton & Rey, probably about 1910
(Betty McGlynn archives)

CASA DE LAS OLAS

© 1985 by Betty Hoag McGlynn

From 1901 until 1941 almost the entire eastern third of New Monterey's coast was occupied by a single estate, *Casa de las Olas* ("House of the Waves"). It lay between McClellan and Reeside Avenues and stretched along 1000 linear feet of Monterey Bay. In 1900 two women built a small cottage on Wave Street near Reeside. Other than that, there were no structures along the bay until one reached the shack of H.R. Robbins' rudimentary fish-canning business near the Custom House.¹ In October of 1941 the entire property was sold to Angelo Lucido, president of the San Carlos Canning Company. During World War II Mr. Lucido gave the city of Monterey use of the home as a twenty-four hour childcare center for working mothers. Other buildings were headquarters for the California State Guard. In the late 1940s most of the structures were razed to make way for new canneries and reduction plants. Only the carriage house which had stood near the foot of Drake Avenue survived: in 1943 the Western Fish Processors (a "stickwater," or wastewater, treatment plant) incorporated it into their new business.² Apparently the carriage

house was moved later to a site across the row where it served as an office for a biological supply house, according to photograph historian Pat Hathaway. This conjures up an image of Steinbeck's friend Doc Ricketts who was killed near there by the Del Monte Express; was the good doctor on his way to this supply house that day? Frank C. Crispo remodeled the building and another cottage next to it, to serve as his antique shop and home. In 1975 he won an architectural award for his efforts.

Casa de las Olas was occupied by only two families during its forty years' existence. The first was Tevis: ill-starred Hugh Tevis, who built the house, was destined never to spend a night in the place. The second family was Murray: James A. Murray, to whom Lady Luck had been generous in the placers of faraway Montana, and his stepson, Stuart Haldorn, who inherited the estate. All three men left an imprint on the history and art of the Monterey Peninsula.

PART I - THE TEVIS SAGA

The Tevis story begins with two Kentuckians who came to California with the gold rush, Lloyd Tevis and James Ben Ali Haggin who inherited his intriguing name from a Turkish grandfather. In 1850 the pair established a law office in Sacramento, and three years later moved it to San Francisco where they managed affairs of tycoons such as George Hearst, mining engineer father of William Randolph Hearst and husband of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, known for her cultural interests and charities. Lloyd Tevis became president of the Wells Fargo banking and express company as well as major stockholder in other businesses: Spring Valley Water, Sutro Tunnel, Bank of America, and the Anaconda and Homestake mines. The Tevis-Haggin partners married sisters and had homes in the original South Park, then built adjoining mansions atop Nob Hill when it became the more fashionable neighborhood. Each home contained a magnificent painting collection, earning the men Life Memberships in the San Francisco Art Association.³ Additionally, Lloyd Tevis boasted that his eleven bedroom house had a library which "contained the largest collection of books on the west coast." Tevis and Haggin were both members of the exclusive Pacific Union Club, and their families were active in San Francisco's social and cultural affairs. The Tevises were lavish hosts. Amelia Ransome Neville wrote that:

Their house was filled with young people, and wonderful parties were given there. For one, there were fireworks out on the bay so that guests at the Tevis ball could look from the broad windows of the house . . . down across the city and out to the bay's dark waters where starry rockets and flares were sent up for their divertimento [sic].⁴

After Monterey's Hotel Del Monte opened in June of 1880, the Lloyd Tevis family made it their official country residence (as listed in *The 1889 San Francisco Blue Book*). Mrs. Tevis was often mentioned in news stories emanating from the caravansary. In 1888 the *Del Monte Wave* gushed that she was a "terpsichore devotee" there, together with other California socialites like Miss Jennie Crocker, A.G. Spreckels, Henry T. Scott, Joe Tobin, Arthur Vachell, Milton S. Latham, George Macondray, etc.

The Lloyd Tevis children were reared in this opulence. The eldest son, Harry L. Tevis, became a doctor. He was a Bohemian Club member and also belonged to San Francisco's Pacific Yacht Club. During the 1880s Harry often sailed his *Halcyon* on races to the Del Monte. The second son, Hugh, was educated at Harvard; in 1888 he (naturally) was one of the 120 alumni members of the San Francisco chapter of the Harvard Club. The youngest son, Will, married the vivacious daughter of Romualdo Pacheco, California's first native-born Governor. The Will Tevises and Hugh belonged to the Bachelors' Cotillon after it was organized in 1885 "to give a series of Germans throughout the year."

In 1890 Hugh Tevis married Alice Boalt, daughter of Judge and Mrs. John H. Boalt of Oakland. His wife died soon after their daughter was born the next year. Named for her mother, little Alice Boalt Tevis was reared in Oakland by her maternal grandmother.

Hugh was devoted to this child. Although he continued to live in his parents' home in San Francisco, he often took Alice and her governess with him on trips, one summer even going to Europe. In the early spring of 1901 they vacationed at the Hotel Del Monte. Nine-year-old Alice made friends with Cornelia Baxter, a girl whom she described as "just like a princess." (Apparently Alice had discerning taste, for the *San Francisco Chronicle* later stated that Cornelia was "conceded to be one of the most beautiful girls of her generation.") Alice insisted that her father must meet her new friend. Hugh did, and the forty-year-old man fell madly in love with a blonde goddess just eighteen.

Cornelia McGee Baxter had been born in Tennessee, but her family moved to Cheyenne, Wyoming, when she was a baby. Her father made a fortune in the cattle business and served his state as Governor. Later the family moved to Denver. Cornelia was sent east to a "finishing school," then to study in Paris. The *Chronicle* (again) said that "she had been the rage of Paris and received many proposals from crowned heads of Europe." The young lady returned to Denver in 1900 to make her debut and soon became engaged to one Gerald J. Hughes, a Denverite. However, Cornelia caught typhoid fever, and as soon as she could be moved her parents sent her to California to "take some sunshine for her health." The Hotel Del Monte sunshine brought Cornelia health and romance; she and Hugh Tevis announced their betrothal in mid-March of 1901.

Denver newspapers buzzed about the marriage planned for three months later. Their debutante would wed an heir of the vast Tevis fortune! That was second only to marrying into European nobility (no matter how impoverished the man might be!); however, even that matter was rectified because Louise Tevis Breckenridge Sharon was sister-in-law of Florence Sharon who had married England's Lord Thomas Fermor-Hesketh. There was another cause for buzzing in Denver: young Hughes acted like a cad and publicly ranted that he had been jilted and would "see that the Baxter family was driven out of Denver society." Contacted by the press, Cornelia's father snorted that Mr. Hughes was only a skunk!

Monterey papers had been buzzing also, ever since August of 1900 when the *Monterey New Era* told of Hugh's plans to build an elegant home of "unique, California-style architecture on a magnificent site overhanging Monterey Bay" which would cost from \$10,000 to \$20,000 *plus* a \$5,000 stable. The little journal exclaimed, "Monterey may yet become the Newport of the Pacific Coast!"

Why did Hugh Tevis build a vacation house in Monterey? While Lloyd Tevis was living, his son had dutifully conducted a commission business in San Francisco. But when Lloyd died in 1899 Hugh happily closed the office and devoted his time to managing his investments. They were many. One involved property in Monterey which Lloyd Tevis and D.O. Mills had acquired in 1875 after sale of some Southern Pacific land.⁶ A year later Hugh was taking an active part in the Monterey community, one of an interesting, enthusiastic



**The Del Monte Bathing Cloak. Any color,
in superior quality \$12.00**

group of men who were dedicated to the idea of making the area a great cultural center. The old capital was beginning to emerge from the lethargy which had characterized its business activity since the time of the gold rush. In 1900 the Monterey Peninsula, in fact, was undergoing a renaissance due to three important factors. First, since its opening in 1880 the Hotel Del Monte and attracted a steady visit of cosmopolitan, wealthy people; once introduced to the region's beauty and great climate, many decided to build summer homes or even retire here.

A second factor was that the United States Census Bureau officially designated the year 1890 as "the end of the frontier." The fact triggered people's interest in their own history, causing a general reappraisal of just what *had* happened in early California. With great pride the realization came that some of the State's most important events had taken place right here; that some of the buildings still standing represented a past now gone forever. A concentrated effort was begun to preserve and restore those which were still left. As Carmel Martin recalled it, in an address to the Monterey City Council years later, "In 1896 it was considered a mark of progress to tear down the old adobes. Now we know they are our most precious possessions and heirlooms and must be saved from the ravenous jaws of the bulldozer."⁷ Gravest concern was for the future of Colton Hall, followed closely by that for the Custom House. Tevis' friend Harry A. Greene was the most vocal of Monterey's citizens in this affair. He worked through the Grand Parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West, urging that the buildings be given to the State for protection. Assemblyman F.P. Feliz tried to pass a bill to support such a gift in 1899, but it was defeated. The next year, with the help of Assemblyman Joseph R. Knowland, it was unanimously adopted. Knowland became head of the California Historic Landmarks League (which was the northern version of Charles F. Loomis' The Landmark Club; San Luis Obispo was the first of the southern cities). The State Federation of Women's Clubs joined the campaign, and by 1903 the ladies were able to publish a guide book of the various landmarks already designated in the State.

Another group which worked for the good of the Monterey Community was the Old Capital Club. Founded in May of 1900, a short month later it had fifty-seven members representing the leading merchants and a smattering of artists. The *Monterey Cypress* mentioned W.W. James, C.R. Few, C.D. Henry, J.B. Snively, A.E. Allen, H.M. Parmalee, S.M. Duarte, T. Oliver, J.B. Bagley, E. Berwick, F.J. Molera, T.A. Work, E.A. Eardley, both B.V. and J.P. Sargent, both William and R.C. Jacks, H.A. Greene, the painter Charles Rollo Peters, photographer Emile A. Bruguere — and Hugh Tevis.⁸

The third factor which stimulated business on the Monterey Peninsula occurred in the nineteen-hundreds. It was the psychological effect of realizing that one was living during the time two entire centuries were slipping their discs! In awesome silence the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth century. It must have been invigorating, almost like one of Pacific Grove's Monarch butterflies emerging from its drab cocoon into sunshine, a sense of "beginning again" which was reflected in a building boom. Hugh Tevis was caught up in it all (No one could have foreseen that only six years later the very earth plates of the western rim of the State would slip *their* discs — and not silently! — forever dividing northern California's history into "before" and "after." Nor that, a short decade after that, the whole world would slide into a first ugly war of nations. For now, 1900, the Monterey Peninsula was tranquil and charming).

On May 12, 1900, a Progressive Association was organized in Monterey; it was a forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce. Later that month Peters returned to California from a highly successful exhibit of his paintings in New York. He said he planned to stay permanently. When he rented the Steadman house, his friend Harry Greene announced that the Progressive Association would completely renovate and redecorate the place for Charlie Peters and his little family. Peters delighted everyone by fulfilling the trust (as it were) in July when he purchased thirteen Acres of the Doud tract and began construction of a palatial estate at the south end of Grove Street. Shortly after, Emile Bruguere also bought Doud land for the same purpose. About this time there were rumors that "San Francisco capitalists" might build rental bungalows in New Monterey; the Progressive Association at once countered that *it* might furnish some cottages there to attract summer vacationers. In late summer two women from San Francisco, Margarita B. May and Mabel

E. Sanders, did build the first small house on the New Monterey beach.

On October twenty-fourth work commenced on the Hugh Tevis house; it was expected to be finished by February of the next year. He had engaged a Mr. Farr as architect and C.M. DePew as contractor, both from San Francisco. A local contractor, D.K. Fraiser, was to represent Mr. DePew in Monterey. The residence was to stand on a stone foundation which covered 40 x 276 feet. The buildings would have an ocean frontage of 272 feet and stand twenty feet above the beach. To bridge a natural ravine, a hundred-foot steel arch would be installed for supporting the weight of the house. In the basement there was to be a heating plant, the plumbing system to supply every room in the place with hot water. Also there would be an electrical light plant which worked from storage batteries. No detail was to be overlooked: for instance, doorknobs were to be crafted from silver. All rocks were cleared from the beach below the buildings, and large boulders were blasted away to install a 250-foot pier with a fifty-foot bath house. On November nineteenth Hugh ordered a forty-foot steam launch for cruising around the bay. By February of 1901 Hugh Tevis added more land to his property. He bought 400 linear feet facing on the south end of Ocean Avenue (as Cannery Row was then called). Most of this rocky promontory was for a large corral adjoining the stable. Automobiles would not appear in pastoral Monterey for several years; horses were all-important. Alex Darrow held a valuable position, being in charge of the Tevis stables; he had already moved his family down from San Francisco (The paper happily noted the town's increase in population). At the opposite end of the property Tevis also bought another 150 feet in order to move the poor little May-Sanders bungalow farther away from his house which had stolen the view and left it in shade. To please the women Hugh added a "piazza facing the ocean, which will further enhance it."

In March the *Monterey Cypress* headlined an article "Tevis Puts Up the Coin." Financial troubles had overtaken plans to erect a two-story building on the north side of Franklin between Alvarado and Main (now called Calle Principal). Hugh put up the money for completion of the brick and iron building. It would be known as the Tevis Block, and the Capital Club would have permanent quarters upstairs in "beautifully appointed rooms."⁹

Those early months of 1901 must have been heady ones for Hugh Tevis. One day his workmen uncovered an ancient Indian buried in the traditional crouching position; it was said that its teeth were petrified. The history buffs were intrigued. At the Del Monte there were exciting events. Helena Modjeska delighted guests with her interpretation of Shakespeare's "As You Like It." Polo was a new sport on the Pacific coast, and the hotel's turf was popular. In March Frank Carolan sent down by rail seven horses and the Burlingame Country Club another fifteen. Always there were visiting celebrities, many of whom Tevis no doubt knew. Both Vachell and photographer Arnold Genthe were lionized at the hotel; they came and went, as did other wealthy artists such as Francis McComas and Theodore Wores. In March alone the Del Monte had as guests Charles Crocker, president of the Pacific Improvement Company which owned the hotel; the president of the Pullman Company; Marshal Field of Chicago; Hugh's father's old partner, D.O. Mills from New York; President Hayes of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company; and Mrs. Steyvesant Fish brought her private train full of friends from Santa Barbara. Then there was Cornelia McGee Baxter! One can guess that she and Hugh found time for some romancing, such as trying out M.R. Duarte's brand new glass-bottom boat ("The Monterey Bay Aquarium" of a century ago!); the enterprising fisherman had had it designed in the shape of a Venetian gondola.

However, all was not going well with the Tevis house. Two contractors proved to be "too many cooks for the broth." There was dissension and the Monterey contractor was fired. The workmen went on strike in protest. As April of 1901 neared it became obvious that the structure would *not* be ready for occupancy by the newlyweds. Never mind! While they waited they would take a trip to Japan and gather some Oriental knick-knacks for their home.

On April tenth Hugh Tevis and Cornelia Baxter were married in San Francisco. Reverend Dr. R.C. Fouts, pastor of Grace Cathedral, read the service at a family-only affair held in the Palace Hotel. The ceremony was muted because Hugh's mother was now an invalid and still in mourning for her husband's recent death, followed shortly after by that of his

brother. Also, Louise Tevis Breckenridge Sharon had recently lost one of her teen-aged sons. The G.W. Baxters and their three young daughters and little son came from Denver. The only other guests were Dr. Harry Tevis, Will Tevis and his wife, Carter Tevis (a cousin), Lloyd Tevis Breckenridge and his sister, and a Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Blanding and their daughter. After a simple supper Hugh and Cornelia slipped away for a day at Santa Cruz and a visit to their Monterey house abuilding. Two days later they sailed across the Pacific.

For several weeks family and friends received happy notes from the couple, and packages arrived "for the nest." Then tragedy struck. On June eighth Dr. Harry Tevis and the Baxters in Denver received telegrams from Cornelia saying only that Hugh had died the day before in Yokohama. "Condolences and inquiries streamed over continent and under ocean" as everyone wrote to the bereaved girl. It was several days before they learned that Hugh had succumbed to an acute appendicitis attack. Harry induced the press to withhold the news for a day so that he could ease the shock to his mother who was staying with her grandson at the Del Monte. When the public learned in San Francisco, there were expressions of general sadness; one comment was that "young Tevis did so much for the artists of the city. There is hardly one who is not obligated to him for help of some kind." Monterey hung its flags at half-mast and its papers declared his loss a blow to local business and the roll which it had been expected he would play in the future of Monterey. Construction on *Casa de las Olas* was suspended. His will disclosed that he had left the house to Cornelia, and all his other holdings to her jointly with Alice Boalt Tevis. His estate was worth one and a quarter million dollars.

Cornelia decided to continue work on the house. It finally was completed on September eleventh and the young widow and her relatives, who had been waiting at the Hotel Del Monte, moved in for the winter. On February 9, 1902, Cornelia bore a son in San Francisco. She named him Hugh.

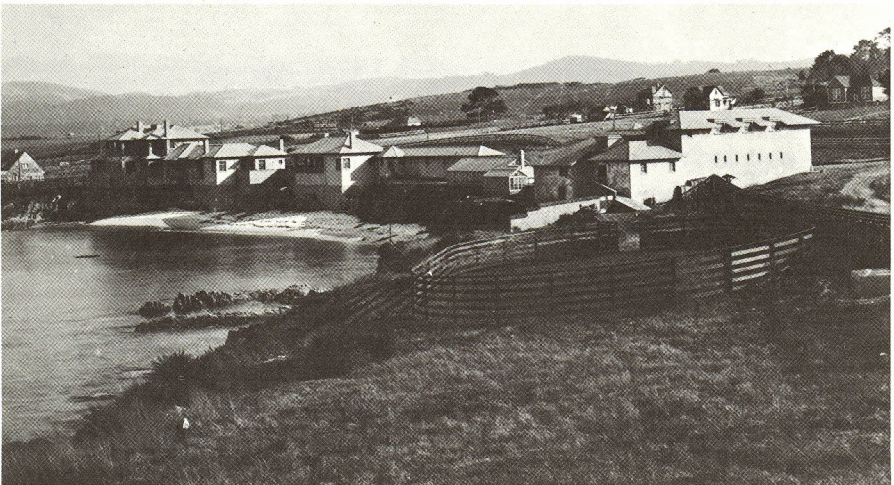
In a special disposition the judge in Salinas redefined the will which Hugh had made, making the property to be shared in three equal parts as the father would have wished. Cornelia and the two children stayed occasionally in the Monterey house, but early in the spring of 1904 she sold it to that master real estate entrepreneur, David Jacks. It seems unlikely that the Jacks family planned ever to inhabit the place for they already had a handsome residence of their own at the corner of Van Buren and Scott. Certainly the eighty-one year old Scotsman wasted no time in reselling *Casa de las Olas* that summer to a Montana millionaire, James A. Murray — who promptly renamed it "Hacienda Grande." The press often referred to it as the "Murray Hacienda." It would remain the Murray family home for thirty-six years.

There is an unusual twist to Cornelia Tevis' story, according to a letter written to the Monterey Public Library in 1983 by True E. Moseley of New York who wrote that Cornelia married again and lived (happily, we hope) in Paris as Mrs. Evelyn Toulmin. Hugh, Jr., was educated in France and studied at Oxford. True to family tradition, he was a yachtsman (of sorts): his motor boat, *Bulldog*, achieved a world's speed record in its class! On April 13, 1926, at historic St. Peter's Church in London, Hugh married Prudence Ponsonby who belonged to a distinguished British family. Eventually the couple moved to Cape Town, South Africa, and there they built another dream *casa*, overhanging a far-away shore. Hugh and Prudence named their mansion "Monterey."

To be continued

NOTES

- 1 Robbins was bought in 1903 by F.E. Booth who built a pier there and operated Monterey's earliest major sardine-canning business. Cannery Row research historian Michael K. Hemp says that Booth operated his plant until May 28, 1941. Remnants of the Booth Pier can still be seen in the bay below when one stands in front of Santa Rosalia's statue.
- 2 Hemp.
- 3 The nucleus of Stockton's Haggin Museum is the nineteenth century art work collected by him and his son, Louis Herah Haggin.
- 4 *The Fantastic City*, p. 186.
- 5 From the 1892 "Illustrated Catalogue of Knitted Bathing Suits," published by J.J. Pfister of San Francisco. Courtesy, California Historical Society. From the Betty McGlynn archives.
- 6 The records were filed September 30, 1899, in the Salinas County Courthouse.
- 7 *Noticias del Puerto de Monterey*, Vol, III, #1, March, 1959.
- 8 Another direct result of this civic historical revival must be mentioned: increased veneration of Junipero Serra. Monuments to preserve the memory of the great Franciscan seemed to spring up like mushrooms throughout the State. James A. Murray was directly involved with this aspect of the revival, as will be told later.
- 9 In November of 1902 the Superior Court approved sale of the Tevis Block to Harry A. Greene. Mr. Greene's plans for the building were the same as Hugh's had been, plus a terra cotta facade. He "added an artistic plate glass door" in December. However, only a week later Greene sold the whole thing to Frank L. Ordway, a British gentleman who had just come to Monterey for his health. Ordway engaged architect Harold H. Weeks to design a three-story edifice. Mr. Ordway died on April 23, 1908, but the building still stands and has kept his name.
- 10 Ms. Mosely wrote that the home is used today as headquarters for Seardel Investment Corp., Ltd., a business firm. For an unknown reason she consistently referred to Cornelia as "Constance."



Casa de las Olas, 1901

(Pat Hathaway Collection.)

From left to right: May-Sanders summer home; Tevis-Murray mansion; two guest houses; gallery; greenhouses; stable (note ramp exit to corral in foreground).

THE EDITORS
MONTEREY HISTORY
AND ART ASSOCIATION
Post Office Box 805
Monterey, California 93942

Non-Profit Organization
Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 88
Monterey, California

Return Requested

Officers and Directors

OFFICERS: 1984-85

President: Mr. David B. Hudson
Vice-President: Col. Richard L. Clarkson
Treasurer: Mr. George Blackstone
Secretary: Mrs. Charles Aucutt
Member-at-Large: Mr. Gerald Fry

EDITORS:

Betty Hoag McGlynn
Virginia Woodward Stone

DIRECTORS: Mrs. Charles Aucutt, Dr. Arthur Benoit, Mr. George Blackstone, Mrs. Kenneth Bliesner, Mr. Ed Bliss, Mrs. Tina Del Piero, Mrs. F. Lee Early, Jr., Mrs. Amelie Elkinton, Mr. Fred Farr, Mr. Gerald Fry, Mrs. Frank Granito, Mr. David Hudson, Mrs. Jay Hudson, Mr. Kenneth Kelley, Col. Perry B. Lamson, Col. John McCune, Mrs. Richard Murtland, Dr. Philip Nash, Mrs. D. Kent Nelson, Mrs. John J. Pavick, Mrs. Henry Ragsdale, Mr. Robert Reese, Mr. William N. Reno, Mrs. Andrew Resendez, Mrs. John Robotti, Mr. John Sewald, Mr. Gordon Paul Smith, Mrs. Virginia Woodward Stone, Mr. Kenneth J. Walker.

HONORARY LIFETIME DIRECTORS: Mr. Ted Durein, Col. Harold Mack, Mrs. C. Tod Singleton, Jr., R. Admiral Earl E. Stone.