

NOTICIAS
del
PUERTO de MONTEREY
A Quarterly Bulletin of Historic Monterey Issued by
The Monterey History and Art Association
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Member: National Trust for Historic Preservation
California Historical Society • Conference of California
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Vol. XLVII No. 4

December 1995



"Hark the Herald Angels Sing!"

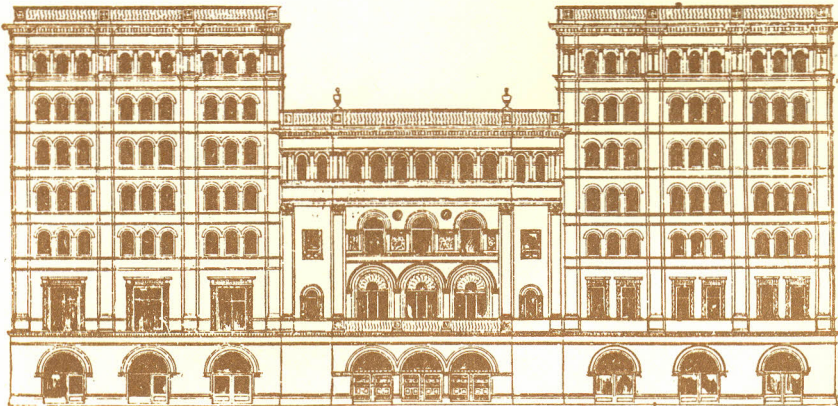
Inside: JO MORA and the Mora Family

JO MORA: *THE MORA FAMILY*

© 1995 By Betty Hoag McGlynn

CONCLUSION

Jo Mora's family have a proud heritage. Benezit's ten volume biography of world-famous artists lists over a dozen Moras who have been Spanish sculptors. Back in the 17th century, there was even another Jose Mora in Spain; he carved gargoyles on the facade of Granada's cathedral. Monterey's Jo Mora was son of Barcelona sculptor Domingo and his French wife, Laura Gaillard (from Alsace Lorraine). Soon after their marriage Domingo won a scholarship in South America and the couple lived for several years at Montevideo, Uruguay. There two sons were born: Francis Luis in 1874; Joseph Jacinto on October 22, 1876. Shortly afterward the family moved to Alston, a small town in Massachusetts, where the boys attended grade school. They completed their education at Pingry Academy in Elizabeth, New Jersey. During their absence Domingo received a commission from Boston architect Joseph Cleveland Cady. New York City was to have a new opera house: Cady had been asked to design it. The Metropolitan Opera House was built near Grand Central Station. When its doors opened on October 22, 1883, the Met boasted of having the largest auditorium in the world. The public, dazzled by "dress" of the audience it soon attracted, dubbed the tiers boxes "The Diamond Horseshoe." Architecture of the building was of Early Renaissance style.



FRONT VIEW, ON BROADWAY.

Although spectacularly ornate inside, the opera house outside was rather austere; one unkind newspaper reporter commented that "its Broadway entrance resembles a yellow brick brewery." Domingo Mora's terra-cotta relief panels of little boys playing musical instruments and dancing were located high up on the Broadway entrance and ". . . unfortunately were too small in scale to have the effect to which they are really entitled. They have the naive and child-like grace which is visible . . . in the work of Luca della Robbia in the 15th Century."



Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. LXVII, No. 402, November 1883 (Domingo Mora)

Is One of Them Jo Mora?



"Domingo Mora, 1883"

Ten years later the Met's appearance had become a disgrace, "coated with a layer of coal dust from a million heating furnaces and wind-blown dried horse manure from the principal means of transportation in New York of the pre-automobile age." For eighty-three years people gloried in the interior of their opera house and complained about its factory-like exterior. Finally in 1966, a new hall was built at more fashionable Lincoln Center in mid-town Manhattan. The old Metropolitan Opera House was sold and soon razed to make way for a run-of-the-mill office building at 1411 Broadway. Domingo Mora's singing sons (if indeed, Luis and Jo had been his models) met the wrecking ball.



" Domingo Mora, 1883"

Happily that was not true in their real lives. The boys had been given use of their father's studio from the time they were babies. Tutored in art by him and later educated by the finest teachers in New York City, both men became successful professionals. Luis Mora was internationally known for his landscapes and portraits; the government of Spain, in fact, commissioned Luis to contribute one painting every year, to be hung in the Prado Museum. Jo Mora's career will be discussed later.



World War I poster by Luis Mora for the U.S. Bureau and Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense

In the mid-1880s, Stanford University began building its great institution. Another Boston Architect (Charles Atherton Coolidge of the firm Shefley, Rutan and Coolidge) planned Stanford's buildings in the Romanesque style of Henry Robson Richardson. Augustus St. Gaudens had been invited to design the frieze for the arch. When he could not fulfill the commission, the Coolidge firm engaged Domingo Mora to make "The March of Civilization." It was completed in New England and shipped to California in time for the opening of the school on May 14, 1887. Like the singing boys, Domingo's marching band was completely destroyed, this time by the great April, 1906 earthquake.

In the meantime, Jo Mora had begun his career as an illustrator for the newspaper, *The Boston Traveler*. Later he drew a serialized cartoon strip for *The Boston Herald*. Called "Animāldom," its humanized little creatures antedated Walt Disney by many years. Then a Boston publishing company, *Dana Estates*, offered him a ten-year contract to write and illustrate children's books. Jo fulfilled his commitment with plenty of time left for adventure in the Southwest and Mexico. Also periodic visits were made to California. During one of them he met Grace Alma Needham in San Jose, and fell in love. The couple were married on January 6, 1907. Soon they bought a ranch on the hills near Mountain View. Jo's parents joined them. Father and son worked together on commissions which became so numerous that they opened a second studio-workshop in San Francisco.

When Domingo Mora died on July 24, 1911, his son was left with a heavy workload to complete alone. There were orders for architectural adornment of buildings; for garden fountains, sun-dials and wall plaques; for memorial statues and monuments; one was even for man-hole covers. Clients asked for styles as diversified as Romanesque, Byzantine and Renaissance. Subject matter ranged from bonneted Indian chiefs to bonneted pioneer women, from politicians to favorite ponies. Jo was prepared to use materials as dissimilar as marble, porcelain, wood, stone and bronze cast in the *cire perdue* (lost wax) process. The young sculptor was determined to finish all orders. One was terra-cotta medallions for the facade of a new San Francisco Native Sons building. Its success led to Jo's public acceptance as a leading sculptor of the West (along with Arthur Putnam, Melvin Earl Cummings and Robert I. Aitken). The reason? Jo Mora was "discovered" by James Duval Phelan, a truly great art patron. Phelan admired the Native Sons' decorations so much that he engaged Jo to design a tremendous fountain for Villa Montalvo, a Mediterranean palazzo he was building near Saratoga.

Occupying a walled end of the Spanish Court, a bronze tablet is displayed between twenty-foot tall Greek columns. Its poem, a tribute to the mythical Queen of California, was written by Senator Phelan himself. Below, water spouts from the beak of a griffin (Califia's steed; half-eagle, half-lion); on either side is the figure of an Amazon maiden; while beneath the basin, wood nymphs cavort. A mere human is quite dwarfed beside this magnificence.



"Fountain at Villa Montalvo" (Jo Mora, 1918)

Villa Montalvo was a meeting place for "artistic giants" of California. Singers, dancers, playwrights, artists, authors - all received help if the Senator liked them. He liked Jo. In 1913 it was Senator Phelan who sponsored Jo Mora's membership in the Bohemian Club.

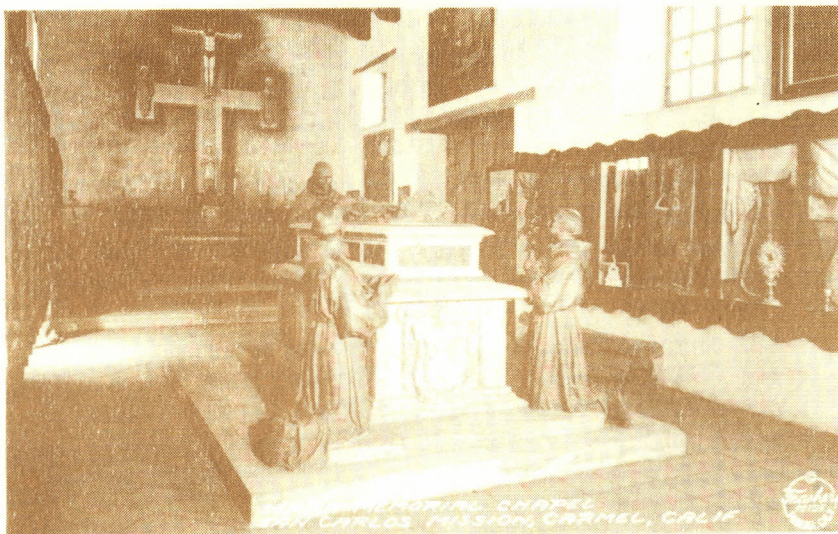
From 1918 through 1920 Jo Mora's budding career was interrupted by World War I. Sent to Camp Zachary Taylor in Kentucky, he achieved the rank of Major, rendering unique service to the Signal Corps as translator of Native American languages. On December 10, 1920, Mora wrote to Senator Phelan at Montalvo:

I am here (San Francisco) to "settle up" one of the most important and interesting commissions I have ever been given. It is to execute the Sarcophagus for Father Junipero Serra and three Franciscans buried beside him in the Carmel Mission. Could anything be grander for a sculptor who loves his California. . .? I am girding my loins for the supreme effort of my life.

This letter was found in the estate of Senator Phelan's nephew and heir, Noel Sullivan, who lived in a palatial spread of his own up Carmel Valley, Hollow Hills Farm. A bachelor like his uncle, Noel was much loved and respected as the Monterey Peninsula's *Croesus*. His largess was showered on cultural causes of the community. Betty Patchen Greene remembers Noel as "the quiet San Franciscan who gave the (Carmel) Bach Festival moral, financial and social support." On a hillside near Point Lobos there stands a beautiful convent for cloistered nuns; Noel Sullivan built the Carmel Monastery in 1931, to commemorate his father who is buried there. The Carmel Art Association is indebted to him for financial help and encouragement during its early days. It is suspected that Noel Sullivan was instrumental in bringing Jo Mora to Carmel.

The Carmel Valley Manor, a retirement community, now occupies the architectural award-winning buildings which crown the old Hollow Hills farmland. Noel's chapel still stands in use. There his great organ enriches services.

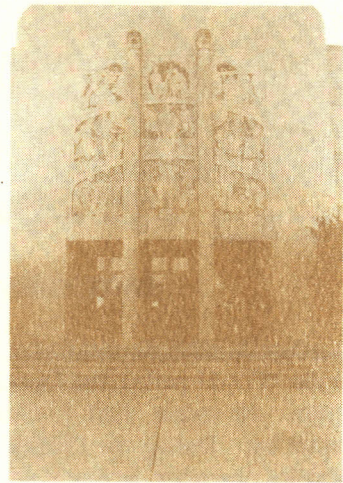
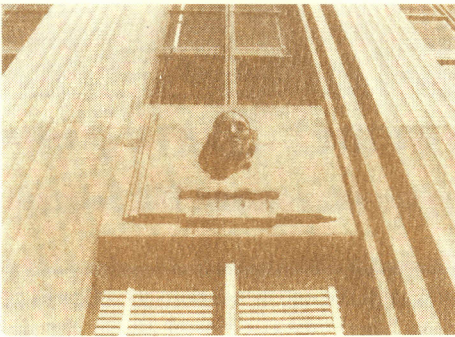
On January 6, 1921, the *Carmel Pine Cone* reported that Jo and his wife were in town looking for a house. If it were suitable they "might remain for several years." Well, Sam Powers knew who Jo was - Sam's wife, Jane Gallatin Powers, was an active member of the San Francisco Art Association and a good friend of Senator Phelan. Sam and his partner had been the original developers of Carmel-by-the-Sea which they envisioned as a "home for creative people." Sam Powers gave the Moras a solid block of undeveloped land at First Avenue and San Carlos Street. The couple built a cottage for their family which now included a son and daughter. There was even room to keep several horses. Jo happily commuted daily to the Mission where he worked on his Serra.



"Serra Sacophagus," Courtesy, Frashers Photo, date unknown (Jo Mora also designed the cross in the background. It was plated in pure gold leaf foil. It was later painted over with house paint by Mission restoration workers.)

The monumental bronze and travertine Serra sarcophagus was completed in 1924. Soon after the Moras bought a 31-acre homesite on a sunny knoll south of Sunridge Road. The family started building an estate which eventually would include many buildings for work and play. Especially appreciated by Jo were the stables and barns for horses. Many horses. Jo once admitted, "I'm a fool about horses."

In addition to the equestrian wedding diorama "La Novia," at the Naval Postgraduate School, there are many other Mora sculptures to be seen in Monterey County today. Well known are the fountain and architectural embellishments of the County Courthouse in Salinas, as well as similar adornment at King City's Auditorium a few miles south on the Salinas River.



At Casa Serrano in Monterey there is a fine museum of work by both Jo and Domingo Mora.

In downtown Carmel-by-the-Sea, tucked away in a little court at the northeast corner of Dolores and 7th, there is a pair of Jo Mora ceramic figures who have been dancing their fandango for nearly seventy years: (maybe they had been at the wedding of "La Novia?")



from the **Carmel Dairy**
 Jo Mora and Bill Selgrath

In the 1932-51 period, the Carmel Dairy was at the southeast corner of Ocean and Mission. Its owner, Earl F. Graft, had Jo Mora paint a mural above the soda fountain bar. During the Christmas seasons of the mid-1940s, Mr. Graft gave his customers charming souvenir calendars designed by Jo and based on the much loved animals in the mural. Apparently Mr. Graft also gifted his employees with personal Jo Mora greeting cards. Bill Selgrath was a driver at the dairy from 1947 to 1949.

Notes: Please see the September 1995 issue of *Noticias*.

Our guest writer, Betty Hoag McGlynn, the Board of Directors, the Editorial Board, and the staff of Monterey History and Art Association wish you a very happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

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Noticias del Puerto de Monterey is a quarterly publication
issued by the Monterey History and Art Association every
March, June, September and December.

ISSN No. 0886-7151

Change of address should be directed to the Association
Office: 5 Custom House Plaza, Monterey, CA 93940

MONTEREY HISTORY
AND ART ASSOCIATION, LTD.
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