

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 9, 1950

The Dedication of the Stevenson House

In this House in the Year 1879

Lived Robert Louis Stevenson

Essayist, story teller and poet

Whose Contributions to

Literature

Delight the World

This simple bronze tablet bearing the foregoing legend was unveiled on November 26, 1932, at the old white house on Houston Street where Stevenson lived and wrote when "not playing chess and discussing the universe," with his old friend Jules Simoneau. Stevenson often said, "Simoneau personified to him the charm of the old Pacific Capital."

It was Simoneau's daughter, Mrs. Thomas Fussell, who drew aside the American and British flags to reveal the marker following an introductory address by William C. Van Antwerp, according to the accounts published at that time. The address had been prepared by Mayor John P. Sandholdt, who because of illness was not able to be present.

The brief ceremony was concluded by Flodden W. Heron of the Literary Anniversary Club, sponsors of the occasion. Mr. Heron has now presented his valuable and large collection of Stevenson's writings, documents, first editions, pictures, etc. to the State of California to be permanently displayed at the Stevenson House. The collection has arrived and is being sorted and arranged for the pleasure of the guests at next Sunday afternoon's observance of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Stevenson.

Others represented on the memorable day of 1932 were Mrs. and Mrs. Herbert Rothchild, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Sutro and Mr. and Mrs. Earl Weller, all of San Francisco, in addition to Mrs. Robin Clark and Mrs. Van Antwerp, the two women who are credited with having preserved the Stevenson House as a memorial "to the literary and personal charm of the great teller-of-tales."

Included in the group of Peninsula residents present on that date was the late Edward Berwick of Pacific Grove, probably the only person living at the time who knew Stevenson. To Berwick the speakers paid tribute as one

of those who had befriended the ill and near-penniless young writer while a sojourner in Monterey.

Among others attending were Miss Helen Chesebrough of San Francisco, Miss Josephine Blanch of Del Monte, representing the League of American Pen Women; Senator Herbert C Jones of San Jose, whose mother was a contemporary of Stevenson, and other members of the Literary Anniversary Club and local residents.

On Sunday Gelett Burgess will be one of the speakers at the One-hundredth Anniversary Observance. Mr. Burgess has been a friend of the Stevenson and Strong family for many years. It was Mr. Burgess who designed the tomb and the lettering for the marker on Stevenson's grave on the top of a mountain in Samoa where he died in 1894.

Following the dedication of the plaque, Mr. Rothchild caused to have printed 10 copies of a booklet which he presented to members of the Literary Club. Proof sheets of the speech prepared by Mayor Sandholdt and the address given by Flodden W. Heron, speaking for the club, are included in the scrapbook kept by Mr. Heron and now on display at the Stevenson House.

After the unveiling of the tablet, the entire party accepted the invitation of Mrs. Robin Clark to enjoy luncheon in her Pebble Beach home. Golf was the diversion for the afternoon and in the evening Mr. and Mrs. Rothchild gave a memorial Jacksnipe dinner to the members of the club and a few friends at Pebble Beach Lodge. Souvenirs were provided for the ladies, the two most important, being for Mrs. Robin Clark and Mrs. Van Antwerp, who were owners of the Stevenson House at that time Mrs. Clark was given a miniature of Robert Louis Stevenson, painted at Bournemouth in 1884. It was mounted in a hand carved ivory frame. To Mrs. Van Antwerp was given a large framed etching of the Stevenson House, made many many years ago when cedar trees grew opposite the building. A small copy of that etching is included in the Heron scrapbook.

It was in 1941 that Colonel Roger S. Fitch, president of the Monterey History and Art Association, was appealed to by Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Van Antwerp to act as the intermediary between themselves and the State of California in their desire to present the Stevenson House to the State of California, that it might be forever preserved and open to the interested public. It was accepted and has been restored and now houses what

is thought to be one of the finest collections of Stevenson's works and mementoes in existence.

Among the guests at Sunday's event at the Stevenson House, sponsored by the Monterey History and Art Association, will be Mrs. Tobin Clark, one of the donors (Mrs. Van Antwerp passed away a few years ago), Mrs. Josephine Fussell, who assisted in the dedication of the plaque in 1932; Mrs. Millie Birks and her sister, Mrs. E.J. Bolce. It was Mrs. Bolce and her sister, Mrs. Canile Culp, who were then Sarah and Dolly Wright, living with their parents, Mrs. and Mrs. Jonathan Wright on a goat ranch at White Rock, who found Robert Louis Stevenson, a very ill man, on their father's property. They had gone for a walk on the mountain trail and came upon Stevenson lying beneath a tree, too weak to walk or to talk, the horse he had borrowed from Edward Berwick beside him. The girls ran home to tell their father, who came directly to Stevenson's assistance, took him to his home, gave him good food and milk and restored him to sufficient strength to permit him to return to his friends in Monterey.

Mrs. Birks remembers that Mr. Stevenson was so thin that the children called him "Splinters," but he was never too ill to be kind to the little girls,