

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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History of Pacific Grove Museum Outlined in Souvenir Publication

On the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Pacific Grove Museum held in 1909, a souvenir booklet was printed by the Daily Review and edited by Dr. W.V. Grives, in which was published a history of the development of the museum written by Professor Josiah Keep, a member of the first board of directors.

Professor Keep relates that he and Mrs. Keep arrived in Oakland in 1877 and the next summer he chanced to pick up a handbill on the street in San Francisco, on which was printed the prospectus of a new summer resort in a large pine forest, near the seaside city of Monterey. He came to Monterey by steamer and sought out the new "summer resort," now Pacific Grove. They gathered, cleaned and packed a barrel of shells which they shipped north by the next steamer to form the nucleus of a "considerable cabinet of shells."

The summer of 1879 saw the establishment of the Pacific branch of the Chautauqua Literary Scientific Circle in Pacific Grove. In 1880 Professor and Mrs. Keep became affiliated with the new organization and remained a member for the 30 years previous to the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the museum.

Professor Keep relates that the busy two weeks of the annual Chautauqua assembly were "filled with interesting lessons, learned lectures, enjoyable concerts, delightful picnics and impromptu exhibits. And the next year we would go at it again, with a new audience in part, but with the same interest, or, in fact, a growing one. Gradually we began to feel the need of a place to store our treasures and specimens, and in the summer of 1883 a petition was sent to Mr. F.S. Douty, the secretary of the Pacific Improvement Company, asking that a suitable building be erected as a store room for our specimens and a museum for their exhibition."

The signers of the petition were Professor J.B. Norton, Dr. J.H. Wyeth, Dr. C.L. Anderson, Miss Lucy M. Washburn, Miss M.E.B. Norton and Prof. Keep, all well known in the early Chautauqua days in Pacific Grove. The petition for a museum building was speedily granted, and the octagonal structure, which was so familiar to visitors in Pacific Grove until about 1932, was

soon ready for occupancy. On its shelves were placed many interesting specimens, and for a time a part of its space was used for the books belonging to a small circulating library.

In 1899 it was felt time, according to Professor Keep's writings, for a decided advance. The museum was used, to be sure, by the Chautauqua summer schools, but they were in session only two weeks out of the 52, while Pacific Grove with its rapidly increasing population was right there all the other 50 of the groups of seven days. "This growing interest led to the CLSC to select as their curator, "a lady of fine scholarly attainments and excellent executive ability, Miss Mary E.B. Norton," writes Prof. Keep. And so, largely through her efforts, the museum was established in 1899.

"It had seemed highly proper," writes the professor, "that the association should bear the name of the city which was so vitally interested in its well-being, but that practically the whole control of the museum should be vested in its officers. And so in July, 1900, the CLSC generously donated its museum building and all of its collections to the new organization, on the condition that it should become duly incorporated and legally assume the responsibility which would naturally follow."

The property of the association had by this time become so valuable that it was important that the ownership and control of the same be placed in legally responsible hands. And so, in November, 1900, the old association was dissolved and the 39 charter members proceeded to incorporate the new Pacific Grove Museum Association. The incorporators were Thomas W. Cowan, Mrs. R.L. Sandwick, Mrs. J.W. Page, Miss M.E.B. Norton, Mrs. R.H. Willey, Dr. O.S. Trimmer and R.L. James. The first board of directors consisted of Thomas W. Cowan, B. A. Eardley, the Rev. O.W. Lucas, Dr. Trimmer, Dr. Thomas Filben, Dr. Eli McChish and Professor Keep.