

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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More About the P. G. Museum

In 1902 the Pacific Grove Museum Association was presented with a valuable half-block of land, together with buildings, by the Pacific Improvement Company. This gift was secured through the influence of Miss Kate Coffin, who was able to interest her friend, Mrs. Harriett Crocker Alexander, a member of the company. This property was soon put to good use, for the buildings were remodeled and the museum enlarged, securing much more exhibition room and better facilities for various purposes.

The old octagonal building, which originally was the whole museum, and only half full at that, became the threshold, as it were, to more extensive and commodious rooms. Portions of the building were used as study and work rooms, and part of the grounds were used as preserves for native flowers and ferns. The library which had belonged to the association had increased from a few technical books to a collection of volumes by no means to be disregarded.

The educational value of the museum was constantly kept to the front by its efficient curators since the beginning. In the past, valuable lectures have been given by distinguished and entertaining speakers, and the perpetual growth of the museum really began before the growth of the city, because of the interest of the tourists and the members of the Chautauqua.

Miss M.E.B. Norton, the first curator, said in her paper read at the tenth anniversary celebration in 1909: "On October 20, 1899, at a meeting of citizens called by Dr. Thomas Filben, a constitution was adopted forming the Pacific Grove Museum Association, with 35 charter members. Prof. Josiah Keep, one of the founders of the Chautauqua Museum, was an incorporator and member of the first board of directors. His collection of shells was the first contribution to the Museum, and his work upon "West Coast Shells" one of the first gifts to the library. The new association had the good fortune to secure the services of Mr. Thomas Cowan as president.

Mr. B. A. Eardley, for whom a street in Pacific Grove was named, was the first secretary and treasurer of the board, Mr. E.B. Lewis recording secretary, and Dr. J.J. Williams financial secretary of the association.

The membership soon increased to about 80. The work of the association the first year included the development of the museum, the maintenance of a winter course of lectures (free to members) and a Flower, Natural History and Art Exhibition, in the spring. This exhibition was a departure in the line of popular education.

The booth that attracted the most attention was that of the "Young Folks' Club" under the direction of Miss Marian Rouse, Miss Jeanette Murray, and Miss Etta B. Lloyd.

Through the initiative of Mr. J.K. Oliver of Monterey, an opportunity opened to secure a fine collection of 1,000 specimens of sea-animals which were purchased the first year. The specimens came mostly from Monterey Bay and were valued at \$1,200, but were acquired for \$250. The late R.L. Holman led the subscription of 36 citizens who subscribed \$51, after Mrs. Cowan and Mrs. Jane Page had each given \$100 to secure the collection.

Chaplain Joseph Clements contributed 165 birds, collected and prepared by himself, to start what is now in 1950, a very excellent collection. Mr. J.D. Clark also gave bird specimens. Mr. and Mrs. H.B. Chase donated nearly 200 very fine specimens of mounted birds and mammals, besides valuable skins including a sea otter. Other donors were Mrs. Mary T. McCall of San Jose, Miss M.E. McCord, Mr. William Winston and Mr. Harry B. Winston, Dr. E.K. Abbott, Mr. Edward Berwick, Mrs. Mary Strong Clemens – all givers in the first few years of the museum's life and reported in 1909.

The museum was also indebted that year to the ladies of the social and advisory committee for the gift of 600 birds' eggs, collected mostly on the Peninsula. The Misses A. and A. Bayles, generous friends of the department of marine algae, gave a collection of rare beauty and much scientific value. Mr. H. A. Greene organized a department of forestry.

One of the most important steps in the development of the museum, according to the record of 1909, was the interest taken by Mrs. Harriet Crocker Alexander, who was the donor of \$500 which was used then to adapt the building to scientific purposes, and another \$100 was given by Miss Jean and Mr. Templeton Crocker, niece and nephew of Mrs. Alexander. In 1919 a \$5,000 bequest was given by Dr. Anna Lukens, who became interested through her friendship with Miss Coffin.

Dr. Harold Heath came into the work of the museum before 1909, and was soon elected president of the board. His collections and advice have always been valuable and his additions to the library have been appreciated. He gave many of the courses of lectures while yet holding an important position on the faculty of Stanford University.

The present building was erected in 1932 and dedicated on the 90th birthday of Mrs. Lucy Chase, who gave generously that the museum might be properly housed. Two years later the apartment on the upper floor was added, providing a home for the curator. The late Mrs. Teresa Lloyd and her daughter, Miss Myfawmy Lloyd, made their home there until her death about a year ago. It is now occupied by Marvin Henshaw, the present curator, and Mrs. Henshaw.