

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Trees and Gardens Of Old Monterey**

From the files of the Monterey Gazette and the Monterey Democrat of the early 1870's we learn that further planting of gardens came to Monterey. Juan Bonifacio was praised for his garden of beautiful roses; and Theodore Gonzales was said to have the best laid out garden in Monterey. Rock's nursery of San Jose, represented by J.S. Merritt, supplied many of the trees, shrubs, and plants desired by the people of Monterey. Paul Romie of Monterey and Kelsey's Nursery of Oakland, also came into prominence for the importance they gave to planting. Each of the above nurseries carried advertisements in the local papers.

By 1875, the following, a partial list, had been planted or were available in Monterey: cypress, pine, oak, black locust, acacia, English walnut, eucalyptus, ash, elm, sycamore, mulberry, pepper, Rose of Sharon, snowball, lilac, dwarf pomegranate, silver maple, poplar willow, palm, grape, fig, olive, almond, nectarine, cherry, apricot, apple, currant, gooseberry, blackberry, iron bark, veronica, oleander, japonica, roses, woodbine, geraniums, hollyhocks, jasmine, ivy, and dracoene, all listed in the advertisements. Together with the growth of native flowers, shrubs, and trees, these meant that Monterey had passed the period of disregard.

After the 1880's, especially after the building of Hotel Del Monte and the planting of its world famous gardens, Monterey has enjoyed an ever increasing growth of trees. The American Legion several years ago planted as a gift to the city the plane trees which border the entire length of Jefferson street. Myron Oliver was commissioned to make the artistic benches which are such a nice part of the Friendly Plaza, when that beautiful garden was completed. When he received his check to cover the cost of the benches he put the entire amount into the 50 trees which now surround the Friendly Plaza and the Few Memorial building. Mr. Oliver also planted, at his expense, the trees around the block on Alvarado, Scott, Oliver and Decatur streets. The late Mrs. Mary Black Morrison planted all the acacias which beautify Church and Abrego streets. Recently Mr. Jack Dougherty planted the Hawthorne trees from Casa Munras to the intersection of Munras avenue and Abrego streets.

The Monterey Women's Civic Club were the instigators of the planting of the trees on Calle Principal. Mrs. B.D. Marx Greene was the president of the club at the time of the planting and with a committee she visited all the property owners and obtained their permission for the plantings. Mrs. Francis Elkins and the Misses L., M. and V. Jacks have also planted trees in front of their respective properties. The Monterey Peninsula Herald, the law firm of Hudson, Martin, Ferrante and Street, William Hudson, Dr. Winton F. Swengel and the Herald Printers and Publishers, planted in the parking space in front of their buildings on Pacific street and the City of Monterey, which maintained all the trees, planted those on Pierce street.

One of the most unique innovations in landscape treatment during the American period, was the use of whalebone for paving and ornamental purposes. An article in the Monterey Gazette, December 23, 1864, seems to have been the first mention of its use by Juan Girardia, a merchant and one-time owner of the Stevenson House. The editor in commenting upon that innovation wrote:

"Improvements – We give Mr. John Girardia credit for having discovered a use for the large quantity of spines or back bones of the whale which are so plentiful on the beach. He has used them, after cutting and trimming to a proper size and shape, as paving blocks in making a neat and pretty sidewalk in front of his two stores he is fitting up. We hope others may be induced to follow his example, as it is quite an improvement."

Girardia's example was followed by others in Monterey; in fact, the use of whalebone for paving blocks, curbing, and ornamental purposes became a Monterey tradition, and is noticeable today. Some of the best examples in existence today are the sidewalk in front of the Whaling Station on Decatur street; the steps at the First Theatre, and for ornament, some in the garden of the Soberanes Adobe. The walk leading from the gate at the Royal Presidio chapel to the entrance to the church was formerly of whalebone and was a great attraction to tourists and townspeople alike. It was removed several years ago and a modern brick walk laid in its stead.

In a Monterey Daily Cypress published in 1914, we came across an interesting article telling of an Arbor Day planting on the Serra Landing place. The event was under the auspices of the Monterey Civic Club and was reported a success from the standpoint of the number of contributors who brought many different species of

trees, plants and shrubs to be planted. The women also were assured of the beautifying of the Presidio tract, adjoining, by officers of the post who attended the planting by their special invitation.

The Serra lot was then state property administered by the Landmarks League of California. It is now under the Division of State Beaches and Parks.

Among the contributors were the members of Junipero Serra Parlor of Native Daughters of the Golden West, who brought a fine palm tree which was planted by a committee consisting of Miss Tillie Bergschicker, Mrs. Mamie Wolter, Miss Estella Gonzales and Mrs. William Hubbard. Mr. William Bergschicker also assisted in the planting. He seems to have been the only man who helped. The article mentions that the ladies of the Civic Club had been out very early in the morning every day the previous week, preparing the lot for planting, and worked hard with hoes, rakes and shovels. The palm tree planted by the Native Daughters is now a huge palm tree which may be seen by all who pass the Presidio Gate on their way to Monterey.

Other contributors were: the Del Monte Hotel, which sent a quantity of cannas and roses from the famous hotel gardens; Mrs. William Sandholdt, Jr., Mrs. F.A. Zimmerman, Mrs. E.C. Rust, Miss Estella Gonzales, Mrs. William Gibson and the Misses Jacks who sent four boxes of rooted geraniums, more than one hundred to the box. Of all this planting there appears only the palm tree as a remembrance of the planting on that Arbor Day in 1914. We remember a rustic arbor that once stood at the end of Van Buren street inside the Serra Park, but that also has disappeared.