

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 17, 1950

### **They Gave a Ball to Beautify Cemetery**

Back in 1910 the members of the Monterey Women's Civic Club were really interested in civic matters. They were so genuinely interested in the beautification of the City of Monterey that they spent a week preparing the soil and planting at the Serra Landing Place, as reported in this Diary on Tuesday evening. That was in 1914.

Early in 1910 the women of the club decided that the Monterey cemetery needed their attention and so they went to work in earnest to clean it up, do some planting and in general make needed improvements there. This project needed financial aid, so they gave a ball in Bagby Hall.

The Monterey Daily Cypress of February 8, 1910, reported: "The Civic Club ball last evening was one of the pleasantest affairs that has been given in Monterey this year. It was a full-dress affair, and the young ladies looked pretty in their dainty gowns."

The report of the party goes on to tell of the fine program of dances. These were given by some young people who had been drilled by the late Mrs. M. M. Gragg. "They showed skill and grace, and the pretty dances were intently watched by those present."

"Another attraction was a fortune teller's booth. This was a diversion that was a happy one, and was patronized by the young people, who wished to learn what Dame Fortune held in store for them."

The management of the dance was under the direction of Mrs. Gragg, who was floor director, and who had as her assistants Ross Sargent, George S. Gould Jr., Carmel Martin and Joseph McAleer.

At a meeting of the club on February 11, 1910, the committee on the cemetery improvement reported that "work was progressing fine, walks had been fixed, trees trimmed and water brought into the grounds." At this same meeting it was reported: "The club had undertaken the restoring of the first playhouse in California to a condition that it can be used as a club house, and also for the production of plays on stated occasions." On the same afternoon the club members visited and inspected the building and premises in a body. Estimates of repairing the building had been received, according to the report. One company was willing to do the exterior work for \$900 and the other

quoted a price of \$1,500 to put the building in good shape so that it could be occupied, the inside finished and seats placed in it.

The women had further plans to plant the grounds as an old-style Spanish garden and they had the promise of A.D. Shepard of the Pacific Improvement Company that he would furnish plans for the garden and free water service.

On February 16, 1910, a delegation from the club attended the city council meeting to thank the city for the financial help given them in the improvement of the cemetery. Present were "Mrs. Dr. McGowan, Mrs. Hilby, and Mrs. Dr. Davies." Mrs. McGowan spoke for the club and said Dr. Freeman had been "very kind to them and always furnished the committee with a horse and buggy whenever they wanted to visit the cemetery." Trustee Steadman said: "They have done the work better than the trustees themselves could have done it."

At a meeting of the club on June 11 the members were still interested in the old theater project, but a report was brought in by the committee that the commission had done nothing toward turning the building over to the club and until they did they could do nothing.

At the same meeting Mrs. Husted presented to the club "a very pretty little gavel made from teak wood taken from the ill-fated Roderick Dhu." We hope that the gavel is still preserved and treasured by the club, as likewise we hope that the gavel given by Mrs. J.C. Anthony and made from the wood of the Allen home, the first farm house in California, has been placed among the historical items of the club.

Mr. Myron Oliver is modest and honest and he begs us to correct a statement that we made on Tuesday evening saying that he gave the trees which are planted on Alvarado, Scott, Oliver, and Decatur streets. Mr. Oliver instigated the beautification program, but his neighbors paid for the trees in front of their property and the city planted them and cared for them.