

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 24, 1950

A 40th Birthday

The Monterey-Pacific Grove chapter of the American Red Cross was 52 years old on June 7, 1950. The date went by without any particular observation, but that statement would not have been true in 1938, for on that date the chapter really celebrated its 40th anniversary in a grand manner. The invitations read: "A party will be held in the solarium of the San Carlos Hotel, Reverend T.J. Barkle, chairman of the program; a welcome by Mayor Emmett McMenam of Monterey and Mayor William Fiddes of Pacific Grove; Reminiscences by Mrs. Herbert Hoover and Miss Margaret Jacks; songs by Mrs. Edgar James and Bert Fallows; followed by an address by Henry M. Baker, assistant manager of the Pacific Area, American Red Cross, San Francisco."

Niles Pease was the president of the chapter in 1938. There were about 75 members at the dinner to celebrate the event. Both Mrs. Hoover, who was the organizing chairman and first treasurer of the chapter, and Miss Jacks, the first president, spoke of their remembrances of the first meetings and the first work of the chapter at the beginning of the Spanish-American War in 1898.

Mrs Hoover recalled that there were only 60 Red Cross chapters in the whole United States at the time the Monterey-Pacific Grove chapter was organized by a group of young women at the home of her mother, Mrs. C.D. Henry in Monterey. About 40 of those were on the West Coast. Mrs. Hoover, attending Stanford University at the time, returned home from school for vacation just in time to join in organizing the Red Cross chapter. Pointing out that there was no state organization such as there is today, Mrs. Hoover drew a laugh from the party by stating: "Decentralized, I suppose we would call it now."

She also amused those attending by telling of an experience in Palo Alto, where she resided when not in Washington, telling a Red Cross representative there that she was attending the 40th anniversary of the Red Cross chapter in Monterey, the Palo Alto official said: "How could you? Why, Palo Alto's chapter was only established in 1914."

Mrs. Hoover praised the Red Cross work, basing her remarks on "having seen so much of the Red Cross since the organization of this chapter 40 years ago." She went off to China in 1899, after becoming Mrs. Hoover, and saw what it was to be without the Red Cross in the Boxer uprising there the next year. Later, in Europe in 1914, she saw the Red Cross in action, she said. "Let us pray that the Red Cross will not be needed to help with another war, but that it always be ready in any national emergency," she said in conclusion.

Miss Jacks followed Mrs. Hoover, recalling many of the experiences of the members and workers in the early days of the chapter. She said: "We were making woolen bandages by the thousands to send to the boys in the Philippines. We discovered later the boys found them convenient for cleaning their guns." The first and second World Wars had not been heard of at that time.

The war ended, Miss Jacks said, "But somehow we kept the Red Cross going."

Mrs. E.H. Traxler, executive secretary then as now, spoke briefly during the program hour. Mrs. Traxler still has, preserved in a scrap book at the Red Cross office, four letters from Mrs. Hoover and two from Miss Jacks, discussing the plans for the birthday observance and accepting the chapter's invitation to be present and speak of the early days of the chapter's existence.

All living members of the first organization were contacted when possible and sent invitations to the dinner. Original members as listed in the minute book were: Miss Mary Jacks, Miss V.A.L. Jones, Mrs. C.D. Henry, Miss Jean Henry, Mrs. David Jacks, Mrs. A.W. Jones, Mrs. William Kay, Miss Grace Burr, Mrs. A.E. Stewart, Mrs. W.E. Parker, Mrs. Herndon, Miss Julia Herndon, Mrs. J.P. Sargent, Rev. H.S. Snodgrass, Will Jacks, Miss V. Bickford, Miss Matilda Bergschicker, Miss A. Bergschicker, Dr. F.F. Jewell, Mrs. J.H. Sinex, Juan Malarin, Miss Edith Little, Mrs. W.H. Beagle, Miss Mamie Doud, Mrs. Mary McKee, Mrs. Ross Sargent, Mrs. C.L. Houghton, Mrs. M. Perry, Mrs. K.H. Hatton, Rev. J.W. Atkinson, Mrs. Manuel Wolter, Mrs. Elizabeth Martin, Mrs. A. Sutton, Miss Isabel Martin, Miss O.E. Locke, to mention a few.