

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Opening of the Hotel Del Monte

Tonight marks the 70th anniversary of the opening of the original Hotel Del Monte. Memories of the "Roaring Eighties" and the "Gay Nineties" were reviewed for the 50th celebration of that event, but the 75th will never be celebrated for the reason that now the old hotel is a Navy Line School.

"A rare gem of early California journalistic effort" was an article which appeared in the "San Francisco Newsletter and California Advertiser" in the summer of 1880 which told of the opening of Del Monte as follows:

"The latest monument to Pacific Coast enterprise and prosperity, the Hotel Del Monte, was formally opened at Monterey on Saturday last. A lightning express train of six carriages, all crowded to their utmost capacity, left the Townsend Street Depot on Saturday afternoon carrying to the scene of the ceremony the flower of San Francisco aristocracy. A large number of travelers, including General Butler and party, Eugene Sullivan and party, and Judge Delos Lake, were the guests of Senator Sharon, and bound for Belmont.

"A few left the train at Menlo, but the majority were on their way to Del Monte to participate in the ball and formal opening of the hotel. The ride was delightful, the weather being faultless and the scenery beautiful beyond description. It was evening when the brilliant party passed through the picturesque grounds and entered the stately portals of the great caravansary, illuminated in its principal public apartments and corridors by nearly a thousand gas jets, reflected again and again in as many glittering mirrors."

"After registering names and brushing up a bit after the journey, the multitude of visitors sat down to a banquet such as few men but Manager Schonewald could have arranged. Then came an inspection of the hotel, and here even the most sanguine of the visitors were amazed and delighted at the mighty and magnificent scale of everything about them. A detailed description of Hotel Del Monte would occupy many columns, and we must be content to say that no improvement or convenience that modern luxury can require or suggest has been omitted.

"Without counting the space occupied with offices, reading, dining and sitting rooms, etc., the hotel will

easily accommodate between 300 and 400 guests, and many more in a pinch. All the rooms are lofty, airy, sunny and richly furnished. The house faces to the east, the bay being on the west, and has balconies and verandas all around. It is of modern gothic style.

"About 100 feet from the hotel and still in process of building but nearly completed, is a large structure, which will be the headquarters for the gentlemen guests and contain the billiard room, bar room (to be the finest in the state, charge of T.H. Quinlan), ten-pin alley, and other means of amusement and pastime.

"The stable measures 135x40, and has stalls and housing for 60 horses and 60 carriages. The bath house right on the bay has 100 rooms, and is provided with shower baths of fresh water. Five hundred men are now employed laying out lawns and plots, and it is the intention of the company to have 50 miles of gravel laid drives completed before the end of the season. The house has its own gas works of the very best description.

"After inspecting the interior and exterior of the hotel, the company separated to dance, stroll on the beach, or converse on the veranda, as fancy prompted them. In the spacious ballroom some 80 couples participated in the first hop of the season. The majority of the guests of the establishment were present and there were many visitors from the residents of Monterey. The toilets for the ladies were exceedingly rich, costly and elegant.

"Among the gentlemen on the floor were Charles Crocker, Charles Clayton, Major Hammond and Colonel Jackson, who led off the first quadrille. Dancing was continued until midnight. Altogether the opening of Hotel Del Monte was a delightful event that will not be readily forgotten by those who were fortunate to share in it."