

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Stoddard's Visit

It has been our good fortune to be allowed the use of three small volumes of a diary of Charles Warren Stoddard, who lived in Monterey for a time in 1905 and died and was buried in the Monterey Catholic cemetery. In Volume I, beginning on July 12 and ending on August 4, he wrote 23,000 words, according to his own recording.

The diary begins: "Left San Jose at 4:20 p.m. Had chair in chair car and was very comfortable as soon as we got out of the valley and approached the sea. How delicious was the coolness that came with the first touch of the sea air.

"Monterey in the twilight – only 6:30 really, but the sky was overcast – it seems much later. Go to 'The Monterey' because it had been suggested. Take a room at \$2.50 the day. American plan, which is about \$1.50 too much for me.

"Room not especially inviting, though the hotel has the right to advertise itself as 'the daintiest on the coast.' It is really charming, crimson walls, dark wood, pretty carpets: all very cozy and as homelike as a hotel can ever hope to be – out of England! I go to the pretty dining room rather late and seat myself at a little table facing the others. Room has stuccoed walls, paneling, etc., seats about forty."

Harry Greene was the manager of the hotel at that time and Stoddard related how Greene introduced himself as the brother of Clay M. Greene and recalls that he had met him before. Stoddard tells of remembering Greene as having taken the part of a soubrette in fancy dress in an early day play and that he had had his ears pierced in order to wear earrings at the one-night stand.

Stoddard continues: "Think I am going to like the place, though it – the town, I mean – is woefully changed. Now it seems like a dissolving view that has stopped when half dissolved. The Presidio is just over the hill and the streets are filled with soldiers. Those stationed here are very nattily clad in almost skin-tight trousers" and short jackets. They look rosy and hearty enough. There are many in khaki, just arrived from a post of the Columbia River. Many of them are more or less groggy as this street is lined with saloons.

"Climbed to the hill where the last fading signs of the original fort are still faintly traceable. A little higher up – quite on the crest of the hill – stands the monument erected by Mrs. Leland Stanford to the cherished memory of Fray Junipero Serra. It is heroic in size and not unimpressive. An iron railing, high and with locked gaes, surrounds it. Yet some vandal or souvenir-hunter has broken the thumb of the right hand from the statue and carried it away." (The thumb is still gone and the place looks a bit uncared for.)

"Birds have roosted upon the crown of Serra's head and discolored his face and his vestments, but this only lends a look of age to the figure, and it is well!

"In walking down from the hill I passed for the second time the crude cross that marks the site where Junipero Serra said his first mass in the Monterey that was to be. He and his followers must have sailed up into the little creek or inlet, now filled in with a high grade and crossed by the two railways, beached their boat and said mass, according to tradition." (The two railways were the Southern Pacific and the street cars, the latter long since gone.)

In the next paragraph Stoddard regrets that no pains have been taken to preserve the oak tree under which this mass was said.

Telling of his desire of a room in the house which now is marked with one of the History and Art Association historic markers, as Casa Verde, where Stoddard lived and wrote while here, he writes: "This morning on my way down from the monument I saw a house that looked comfortable on the southwest corner of Oliver and Decatur streets. It was painted green, had pleasant windows; there were roses and old-fashioned flowers growing in the garden and the front door stood wide open. One could look quite through the house for the back door was open also. In the parlor window was a homemade placard bearing this legend: 'Furnished Rooms to Let.' I had noticed it on my way up the hill and had said to myself, 'Shall I inquire the price or take a look at the interior?'" Then he describes his visit to the house: "There was a room, with an eastern double window, a bathroom with hot and cold water on the same floor, and a closet. The whole for \$10 a month – but no meals!"

He finally rented the room but ate his meals at "The Monterey" and spent a great deal of time with Harry Greene and his cousins, who, he wrote "Fill the house

to the third and fourth generation.-“ He tells of a tally-
ho trip down to San Jose canyon on a picnic, when “we
were a merry crowd of twelve.”

Passed Carmel Mission and found it looking far more
tidy than in the old days. It looked very quiet and sweet
and tranquilizing all over the place, and I longed to
know who lives in the little house at the foot of the hill.
I suppose custodians of the venerable shrine.”