

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

October 12, 1951

### **Rosemary ... For Remembrance**

*"Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of the earth ... to you it shall be for meat."* Genesis 1:30

I was reminded of the above quotation on Wednesday afternoon when I met a group of four women from the East Bay district, at the Stevenson House in Monterey. They had motored down with the express purpose of presenting to the garden at the old adobe building on Houston street, the start of an herb garden. The visitor donors were enthusiastic members of the Northern Chapter of the California Unit of the Herb Society of America, namely Mrs. David Hartman, the chairman, of Alameda; Mrs. Goldie Sill [?] editor of "The Herculita," the official plant paper for the Hercules Powder Company at Hercules, and the Misses Katherine and E. Giralda Wacker, retired nutrition teachers of Oakland. A few of the group had visited the garden at the rear of the Stevenson House a few months ago and thereupon decided that an herb garden was needed to complete the plan for an old time garden. Wednesday's visit and presentation was a fulfillment of that promise and desire.

The dictionary defines herb as a plant that dies completely or down to the ground, after flowering, or an herbaceous plant used medicinally. Many gardeners ask: "What is an herb garden?" Now the questioner may go to the Stevenson House within the next few days (better yet, give the gardener a week to get it in shape) and see the variety of plants given to Monterey by the Herb Society.

The history of these plants is one of the oldest and most interesting in the world, the names of these herbs appear over and over again, in myth and legend. They are a cure-all, not only for ills of the body, but for the mind and heart as well, relates Helen Lyman in "30 Herbs Will Make a Garden."

Seeds of herbs we are using today have been found in the excavations in Egypt, Pompeii, in Mexico and in the ruins of cliff dwellers in New Mexico. In the Far East in Bible times, anise and other aromatic herbs were used as part payment of taxes. We read, "Ye pay tithe of mint, anise and cumin."

It is strange that we do not know more about the value of these plants today, our great-great-grandmothers used them constantly in cooking and in medicine.

In 1939 there appeared a story in The Independent of an interview with Gil Cano, former constable of Pajaro and in 1884, the stage driver to Tassajara Hot Springs. He said: "The mountains about the springs are well covered with all kinds of herbs which we used for medicine. I used to take back to Salinas sacks filled with these herbs tied to the back of the stage, for my father and his sister, Mrs. W.S. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson and Nicholas Cano used many herbs to make salves and other medicines, for doctors were few and far between in those days. They also used barks from trees. A lot of the old Spanish medicines were made from recipes learned from the native Indians.

Mrs. Nathalie Clark of Salinas writes that she remembers when folks around Salinas would use the [?...?] flower or angel wings) which is classified as an ... to apply to the face for neuralgia, after having bruised it in hot olive oil. She also recalls that her family always had an herb salve in the house made from a recipe given to her mother by Mrs. Mariana Gleason Harris, a member of an old Monterey family. It was very healing.

There is also a story told in Monterey about the Indians and native Californians going to the hillside that is now part of Don Davee park on Munras street to collect a certain type of fern, the roots of which they boiled to make a poultice to use on a bruise.

Among the Spanish herbs were: ?, ?, ?, balsamio, herb de la virgin, flor de August, ?, ?, rose, golondrina amapola and yerba Buena. Among the herbs brought by the visitors to the Stevenson Garden were: thyme, lavender, sage, Prince Rupert geranium, silver king artemisia, rosemary, oregano, yarrow, mint, anise, dill, salvia, pineapple sage and other varieties of mint and sage.

The propagation, preparing and planting of these plants is very simple. Most of them are readily grown from seed in flats, transplanted to small pots, or direct to the herb bed. The perennials are propagated direct from cuttings.

Spearmint, peppermint, and their relatives are easily reproduced from their underground stems. The location of the herb garden is important. The first essential is "SUN and then more sun". A light sandy loam is the best, as it warms early and retains the heat. The soil

around the plants should be kept loose and watered when the top soil seems dry.