

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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City of Butterflies

"The history of the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History looms large in the history of Monterey County," Burton Henshaw, the museum's curator, told the members of the Monterey County Historical Society when they met in the museum building on Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Donald Davies Jr., president of the Society, presided and introduced Mr. Henshaw and his assistant, Mrs. Selzer, to the fifty or more members in attendance.

"The history of the museum also runs almost parallel to the history of the city of Pacific Grove," the speaker continued, and then gave a series of dates marking the advancement of the museum from 1879 until the present day.

In 1879 the California branch of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle was organized in Pacific Grove. Three years later, 1882, an executive board was appointed during the meeting of the Chautauqua assembly and the museum started. The Pacific Improvement Company erected a building to house the specimens which had been collected by the group.

A photograph of this original octagonal building which stood on the ground now occupied by the present fine building, was on display.

In the year 1899 a Pacific Grove Museum Association was formed to work with the Chautauqua committee in the administration of the museum throughout the year. Miss Mary E.B. Norton, formerly a teacher at the San Jose Normal School, was the first curator.

In 1900, Mr. Henshaw recalled, the museum collection and building were given to the Museum Association by the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle and the museum was opened to the public. Two years later the Pacific Improvement Company donated the present one-half block of land to the Museum Association. Then things began to happen to raise funds to support the project. As an example of the activities planned for that purpose was a benefit staged by W.E. Winston who gave an exhibition of his sea lions, trained in the Grove.

Women's rights began to be noticed in 1912 when the Museum Association admitted five women to the board, admitting that they might have some good ideas for the advancement of the museum. Then the board

was made up of 15 citizens. Financial difficulties were being felt as the only support was from memberships, according to the records of the meetings and newspapers.

By 1915 the suggestion was made that the City of Pacific Grove take over the financial problem and the ownership of the museum. The following year the idea was accepted at the city election and the administration and responsibility of the project became a municipal one.

Dr. Anna Lukens, a Quaker and a physician of New York, who had often visited in Pacific Grove, left in her will in 1919 a bequest of \$5,000 to the museum.

1931 was an important year for the Pacific Grove Museum for it brought realization of a long-time dream of the board of directors – Mrs. Lucy Chase prepared to erect and donate a \$14,000 building to house the museum collection. The cornerstone was laid in 1932 and the dedication was held on Mrs. Chase's 90th birthday. The following year the late Dr. Harold Heath was made science director and the late Mrs. Teresa Lloyd the curator. The new building was opened on June 3 for two hours (2 until 4 o'clock) each afternoon – the remainder of the time being used to prepare additional exhibits and renovate cases and furniture, many of which were gifts.

One of the most attractive of the exhibits in the main room arrived about this time. It consisted of the three large cases of marine life which had been the Monterey County exhibit at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco. They are on permanent loan from the county.

During 1934 and 1935 Dr. Heath made two excellent relief maps for the museum, one of the Bay of Monterey and the other of Monterey County. Other gifts received about this time were a collection of Indian baskets from Dr. and Mrs. James, pottery from Dr. and Mrs. Heath and a case of deer from the California Academy of Science.

The building was enlarged in 1939 when a penthouse was built as a second story from the estate of Dr. Lukens. It is occupied by the curator. The west room was opened that year and a collection of antique weapons and other Oriental objects was received from Mrs. Herbert Hoover. In 1939 the California butterfly collection was purchased and when exhibited attracts visitors from far and near.

The Peninsula Audubon Society was organized in 1941 in the room in which the Monterey County Historical Society was meeting. Mr. Henshaw informed his audience. In 1942 a formal garden surrounding the building was changed to one of native plants and in 1944 Mr. A.T. De Rome, a Pacific Grove artist, donated his work of the oil paintings which are used throughout the museum and exhibits.