

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 10, 1951

'Two Little Nuns'

In this centennial year for the Sisters of Notre Dame, it has seemed most appropriate that the mothers of the Junipero Serra School at Carmel Mission should plan a "Fiesta de las Monjas" for next Sunday May 13th, at the mission.

It was in 1943 that the need for a Catholic school became so great in Carmel that the Sisters of Notre Dame decided to make arrangements to accommodate pupils in their own home, Villa Angelica.

This beautiful Spanish-Colonial convent was the jubilee gift of Miss Maria Antonia Field to Sister Mary Angelica in 1930. For years it was a charming villa which the sisters used for rest and recreation. It was in 1945 that Junipero Serra School was opened, and now the quadrangle at the mission also includes a convent, and Villa Angelica is again devoted exclusively to its original purpose.

In a foreword in the booklet entitled "Notre Dame in California," it is written that Sisters Loyola and Mary Catherine came from the mission field of Oregon to San Francisco, there to await more missionaries from Cincinnati. And thus, unexpectedly but providentially in 1851, the California Province of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur was born. For it was then that Bishop Alemany persuaded the sisters not to return to Oregon, which had been almost wholly deserted by the gold rush, but to stay in the new state, where the "fields were indeed white to the harvest."

The Mother House of the Notre Dame Order of Sisters is in Namur, Belgium, and it was a native of that country, Father de Smit, a missionary to Oregon, who first brought the sisters to the West Coast. Six sisters landed at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1846.

The Jesuit Fathers in San Francisco advised Sister Loyola, the Mother Superior, to move to San Jose, which was then the capital of the state, and where they would be near the Santa Clara University, a Jesuit school. On July 4, 1851, the infant foundation was made in a tiny house on Santa Clara street in San Jose. That small building is now carefully preserved at the Nun's Villa at Saratoga.

Many former students have fond memories of the San Jose Notre Dame school, with its surrounding high brick

wall and its beautiful garden. By 1923 the city was crowding so closely around its walls that Notre Dame was forced to seek more spacious fields, and they moved to the former home of William C. Ralston at Belmont, which they have since enlarged several times.

Schools in Marysville (1856); Santa Clara, (1864); San Francisco, (1866); Alameda (1881); Redwood City (1885); Santa Barbara, (1906); Watsonville (1899); Salinas (1906); Chico (1928); St. Columville's, Los Angeles, (1923); Mother of Sorrows, Los Angeles (1948); Carmel, (1930), and Sacred Heart, San Jose (1949).

The Sisters of Notre Dame are a teaching order. Their Provincial House and Novitiate are at Saratoga, which was purchased in 1905, and there also is a Senior Sister's Convent for the veteran sisters who "have borne the burden and heat of the day."

Sister Mary Editha was the first Mother Superior at Carmel and did the pioneer work at Junipero Serra School. She is now in residence at Saratoga.

When the fiesta of next Sunday is over, the proceeds will be presented to the sisters of the school to do with exactly as they please. They are hoping that all the friends of the sisters, and the mothers of the students will attend and enjoy the meals to be served throughout the day, the program, the folk dancing and all the other gay events planned for the day. Bill O'Malley will also be present to autograph and sell his increasingly popular book, "Two Little Nuns."