

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 20, 1951

Adobe Open House

"Is this house open to the public?"

Anyone who has ever lived in an "old adobe" – especially if it has been honored with the designation "historical" knows how often the question is asked and how difficult it is to explain, tactfully but definitely, that one must enjoy some degree of privacy – and have time for other activities also.

This does not mean that the answer is always and invariably "no". There are exceptions – and mighty pleasant ones, it can be added – but it is simply impossible to admit every passerby, every day. And that disappoints a lot of people.

On special occasions, however, some of these homes are opened to the public. Such as occasion is Friday afternoon, June 29, from 2 until 5 o'clock.

Monterey History and Art Association is sponsoring an "historic tour" on that day and the interested public is invited to participate. It will not be a "conducted tour" in the usual sense; five adobe houses will be open, with hostesses in charge, and people making the tour may follow their own inclination as to the order or sequence in which they visit the various places.

In other words there will be no starting point; no parties will be formed. And tickets may be obtained at any of the places visited and at the Chamber of Commerce after next Monday

Homes open to the public for the four will be Casa Amesti, 516 Polk street; the Larkin House, Jefferson and Calle Principal; Casa Alvarado, 510 Dutra Street, corner of Jefferson; Casa Soberanes, 336 Pacific Street, and the Castro Adobe, the home of Miss Margaret Jacks on Castro Lane bordering the Del Monte Golf Course. Tea will be served at the Larkin House by Mrs. Harry Toulmin, owner of the home and granddaughter of Thomas Larkin, the builder.

In addition, there will be special exhibits presented at California's First Theater, Pacific at Scott streets; The Custom House Museum, lower end of Alvarado street; at Colton Hall and at the Stevenson House, Houston street.

Colton Hall's upper floor was restored in 1949 in time for the Centennial celebration of the signing of the State Constitution, and since that time has become increasingly important as one of the tourists' attractions in Monterey.

While we hope several hundred people will purchase tickets for the tour and thereby contribute to the funds of the History and Art Association, we believe the tour will be worth while for other reasons also.

Monterey residents of a century or more ago did not exist on a primitive level. In some respects their standard of taste and elegance were at least comparable with those of their contemporaries along the Atlantic seaboard.

For instance, Thomas O. Larkin, one of the outstanding figures in California history, especially during the critical period of the 1830s and 1840s, drew upon his own cultural background of New England to create his environment in this community, besides importing the best that the Far East and Europe could provide.

His home, now owned and occupied by his granddaughter, was the social as well as the commercial, financial and political center of this whole vast territory.

Some of the other places to be opened on June 29th, are modest in size and furnishings – but a sincere effort has been made to preserve the atmosphere of early California, and one result of the tour, we hope, will be a more general feeling of appreciation for the community's historic antecedents, and especially more appreciative of its historic values as they now remain.