

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 13, 1952

### **Irene, the Speckled Hen**

We saw Irene just twice but we renewed her acquaintance each day through reports made at noon and again at about 2:15 o'clock, five days each week. Irene certainly had a world of personality, an unusual disposition and must have had indomitable perseverance to have lived through, seemingly joyfully, the past few weeks. Her friends have become legion, starting out with about 35 starry-eyed six and seven year olds; Irene was also known among businessmen and women shoppers downtown as well. If her name was mentioned among two persons, a third within the sound of their voices, was bound to join the conversation with, "I also know Irene."

Irene lived in a well-built house inside the barn yard within the first grade room at the Thomas O. Larkin School in Monterey. Miss Georgia Hedrick, the teacher of this impressive age group, found Irene in a pet shop, bought her, installed her in the school room a few days after Easter and almost immediately this handsome speckled hen settled herself in preparation for motherhood. The interested boys and girls watched the dozen eggs which Irene kept warm and anxiously waited for May 7<sup>th</sup> the day set for the birth of the chicks.

On the sixth of May at noon our tiny blond six-year old breathlessly told us at luncheon that two babies had arrived – that they were yellow and wet and that Irene was making so much noise "clucking" to announce her complete happiness, that the children just could not study. At last the report came that Irene was the mother of nine, all yellow chicks but one. By that time, Irene was so excited that she had to be tied by one foot to the family home, to keep her from parading her brood through the entire school, so great was her pride.

Irene was the sole live object in the barn and the surrounding barn yard, which had been constructed by the children themselves as a project in their study of farms and farm life. The barn was large enough to play in and there was real hay in the loft and a wire coat hanger served as a derrick fork. In the barn was "Butter" the horse; "Lady," the cow, and "Funny Face," the pig; also constructed by the children as they learned about bones, muscle and flesh.

Today Irene and her nine tiny fluffy chicks, have probably found a good home on a friendly farm, but never will she find more adoring friends than the boys and girls of the first and second grade of the Thomas O. Larkin School in Monterey.

Thirty-eight young men and women from the eighth grade of the Ceres, California, grammar school visited Monterey over the last week end.

This visit was not just an ordinary trip of adventure, it was a planned trip which necessitated a bit of hard work by a group who really wanted to see for themselves the historic sites and buildings about which they had been studying during the year. In order to finance an overnight stay at Asilomar the girls gave a rummage sale which netted \$130 and the boys earned over a hundred dollars through a paper drive and sale. Additional funds were forthcoming through other projects until a total of \$253.48 had been realized, with which they paid not only their own expenses but those of their room teacher, Mrs. Dorothy Keck, and seven adults.

Arriving in Monterey in the school bus, borrowed for the occasion, they broke up into small groups under the guidance of one adult, and visited Colton Hall, Casa Gutierrez, Stevenson House, Larkin House Garden, Custom House, California's Firth Theater, the Wharf, Pacific Grove Museum, Point Lobos and the Seventeen-Mile Drive. The return trip to Ceres was made Sunday afternoon.

The fourth and eighth grade of Walter Colton School in Monterey visited the Custom House on May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, students of the grammar grades of Prunedale school made a trip to the Peninsula to visit the historic buildings. The Sanborn School from Salinas and two Cub Scout groups also paid a visit to the state owned buildings during the last week. There were 19 pupils from the fourth grade and nine adults from the Dent school at Escalon in the San Joaquin Valley, visiting Monterey on Friday and 40 members of an honor society of the Turlock school were interested visitors, hearing historic talks made by the curators at the Custom House, Colton Hall, First Theater, and Stevenson House.