

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'A Piney Paradise'

"A Piney Paradise by Monterey Bay," written by Lucy Neely McLane, is truly a documentary history of the city's first 25 years.

Among the authentic stories Miss McLane tells is one about Thomas Harper, an early citizen. Mr. Harper erected the first substantial permanent home in Pacific Grove. Constructed in 1879, it stands today on its original location. A passer-by noting it on 15th street will find it little the worse for wear and tear of years. Mr. Harper, formerly from Shetland, Scotland, came to the Grove with his wife, Mary, in 1879 and worked for David Jacks, according to Miss McLane. He was very much beloved by all the children, and he was never too busy to be kind to any and all of them.

Harper's son, Sinclair, was the first white child born in Pacific Grove. He arrived on June 6, 1883, and the town announced his birth by ringing the curfew. Sinclair soon grew into a gangling boy, who even in his youth showed "symptoms" of later becoming a civil engineer. A story is told by Miss McLane of one of his early ventures which took place in Greenwood Park in the Grove. He and a few of his boy friends erected a paddle wheel in the park and lined up several pulleys, belted them with strings, and watched their hydraulic plant work.

Fiends and early acquaintances are proud of Dr. Sinclair Harper, the "river doctor," who bossed construction of Hoover Dam and other big jobs and is, perhaps, the only man, who ever built a thing big enough to cause earthquakes in the opinion of the author of "Piney Paradise."

Dr. Sinclair Harper wrote Lucy McLane an appreciative note following receipt of one of the first editions of her book. The note is headed "Oakland, California, Enroute to India." He wrote: "I have just received a copy of "A Piney Paradise" and to say that I am pleased and thrilled with it is an understatement.

"Every page stirs up nostalgic memories and I shall read it again and again from cover to cover. You have accomplished a prodigious task in accumulating such a fund of information from so many sources. How did you do it? ... You are to be congratulated. You have assembled it into such an attractive, scholarly, informative, and readable volume. You may well feel

proud of it and Pacific Grove should be very happy. ... You have advertised a unique town in a unique manner – it is a history that people all over the country should value, an era in the growth of California. .. Certainly it has put Pacific Grove on the map. There is no better means of rousing interest, advertising a city, or state than through a story about it such as you have written. It is drama ..."

Another fascinating story in "The Piney Paradise," concerns Tom Work. We repeat the story as told by the author:

"There was a dairy built by Mr. Jacks in 1887 and rented to William Bodfish. A huge, rambling affair with many sheds, many cows, and consequently much mooing! It was located between the present site of El Carmelo Cemetery and the Pacific Grove Depot, and many adjacent acres were covered with a dense growth of wild lilacs, which in the early months scented the entire atmosphere with its bloom. "The gorgeous array of wild flowers,' exclaimed a son of the founding fathers, 'was almost unbelievable!" No one wanted the land then, so the flowers took it. Large patches of harebells, dewbells, creamcups, wild iris, johnny-jump-ups, buttercups, and daisies were scattered throughout the section.

"William Bodfish hired Tom Work. It was Mr. Work's first job and he is described by a pioneer as "the bonnie laddie who delivered the milk."