

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Land of The Midnight Ride

Yesterday we followed the famous course over which the British passed on their way to Lexington and Concord on April 18, 1775. It is a delightful motor trip over a broad highway lined with beautiful trees just beginning to turn to autumn colors of bright red and yellow, and here and there along the way are the charming colonial homes for which this country is noted.

We are super-saturated with history. We visited the Jason Russell house near which the first battle was fought on that fateful day of April 19, 1775, when over half the colonists were killed in a hand-to-hand struggle with the British.

We stopped to read a marker which told of the capture of Paul Revere. William Dawes Jr., who also rode with Boston, and Dr. Samuel Prescott, were stopped here but made their escape.

Dr. Prescott alone carried the message to Concord that the British were advancing. After being questioned, Revere was allowed to return to his home.

"The Wayside" in Concord is the only house ever owned by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It was especially to see this and the museum of the Antiquarian House, that we made the trip. The house was also the girlhood home of Louisa M. Alcott and was later occupied by Margaret Sidney (Mrs. Daniel Lothrop), authoress of "Five Little Peppers." It is interesting to note that three authors who were no relation to each other should have once lived under the roof of this charming home. Miss Margaret Lothrop, the daughter of the authoress, now owns the house and personally conducts the guests through it. Next door is the Louisa M. Alcott house.

The town of Concord is unique in all American because it has three famous periods of history, any one of which would be sufficient claim for distinction. In a sense that claim may also be applied to Monterey, for we too lay claim to three periods of history.

First, the history of Concord reaches back more than 300 years to the days when the early Puritans made here in the wilderness the first Massachusetts settlement away from tide-water; second, it was the scene of the first battle of the War of the Revolution; third, it was the home of Emerson, Alcott, Thoreau and

Hawthorne, great authors of the period, aptly called the "Flowering of New England." Moreover, like Monterey, it is not just a museum, but a beautiful, elm-shaded town of homes, schools, farms and business, retaining a quaint and old atmosphere.

Exemplifying the three periods of Concord's history are the rooms in the Antiquarian House, built and owned by the society of that name. The Antiquarian Society has a membership of 500 persons who are interested in the preservation of the history of Concord and in acquiring examples of its past such as furniture, documents, fine china, etc. This they have done to an excellent degree, the proof of which is shown in the museum. There are at least a dozen, if not more, rooms completely furnished in handsome furniture made by the best cabinet makers of pre-Revolutionary days; silver, hand-made and designed by Paul Revere; English china and porcelains which are the envy of all who see the collection, old damask and hand-loomed materials and much else of interest.

Here the visitor will also see one of the two lanterns which Paul Revere caused to be hung in the Old North Church; weapons used at the old North Bridge and some of the gun flints used by the Minute Men. If one has time to browse around in the garden they will see the herb garden, which is much studied and imitated by modern gardeners. Here also is a room – the reproduction of Hawthorne's library – in which his entire library of books, his furniture and many personal possessions of the author – have been placed, a gift from members of his family.

Nathaniel Hawthorne came to Concord to live in 1842, with his bride, Sophia Peabody, and lived in the Old Manse to which he gave this Scotch name in his book "Mosses From an Old Manse," "The Peabody Sisters" is an interesting book to read to learn more about Hawthorne, his wife, and the life of Boston and Concord in the 1840's.

The tourist must not fail to see the Concord Bridge for here is the grave of the unknown British soldiers and the Minute Man statue, erected to the heroes "who fired the shot heard round the world." One is impressed by the beautiful surroundings and the silence.