

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Fine Arts and Old Pyramids

MEXICO CITY – The Palace of Fine Arts, a huge, ornate, white marble building, designed and started by an Italian builder in 1900, is one of the “must” places to visit in Mexico City. The interior of the building was completed by a Mexican architect in 1934, with handsome marble and beautiful woods from various parts of the Republic. The Place houses a theater and a museum, but we saw only the theater because the museum was closed, to be reopened November 20.

On Sunday morning at 9:30 o'clock the huge fireproof glass curtain executed by Tiffany in New York and designed by a Mexican, depicting the two volcanoes, Ixtaccihuatl and Popocatepetl, is shown to the interested public for a small admission charge. It is a beautiful work of art and well worth the time spent in hearing the lecture via tape recording and viewing the light changes from sunrise to sunset upon the tiny pieces of varicolored glass.

Rivera and Orozco frescoes are great drawing cards of the art gallery in this building, and one of Rivera's works is his own reproduction of the very one which Mr. Rockefeller refused for the Rockefeller Center in New York, but paid for in full.

President Diaz began the construction of this steel and marble building in 1904. When half done, we were told by our guide, the whole thing sank crazily at one end, for all Mexico City's foundation ground is no more than a mud puddle. Millions and more millions were spent to jack it up with concrete cradles and then the work went on.

Mexico City at present is interested in the financial value of the visit of the Shriners in this capital city this month., believing that it will bring more than 8,000,000 pesos worth of foreign exchange into the country. The Mexican group of this Masonic organization is 53 years old and is composed of more than 500 members. The eight million translated into U.S. money will amount to approximately \$1,000,000.

Most of the ceremonials of this Mystic Order of Shriners will be held at San Juan Teotihuacan, the huge excavated pyramids which lie some 30 miles northeast of Mexico City. After seeing the pyramids and having seen the gay and colorful regalia of the Shriners, we can

easily visualize what a spectacle this ceremonial will be for those eligible to witness it.

Mexico has at least six pre-conquest pyramids, so we are told, but by far the largest is the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan. Its dimensions are imposing, the nearly-square base being 720 to 760 feet and the summit 220 feet above the broad plain.

We imagine after our visit to the pyramids that the Shriners' ceremonial might have been held in “La Ciudadela” (Citadel). It is an amazing quadrangle of ancient masonry running a quarter of a mile in each direction and containing among other treasures a very remarkable Temple of Quetzalcoatl with numerous carved representations of the feathered serpent and of his symbol, the shell, also common in our Christian symbolism.