

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Monterrey, Our Sister City

MONTERREY, Mexico – We should feel perfectly at home tonight in our sister city in Mexico and we do, except for the language problem which is not too bad after all, for most of the persons one naturally contacts speak excellent English. Monterrey is indeed a city, with a population of 331,771 persons. It is the capital of the state of Nuevo Leon, the leading industrial city of the Republic and an important tourist center.

Monterrey, Mexico, has much in common with Monterey, California, for the very good reason that both towns were named in honor of the Viceroy of New Spain, Don Gaspar de Zuniga y Acevedo, County of Monterrey. The imprint of Spanish-Colonial days may still be seen in the narrow streets, the flat roofed houses, colorful patios, the beautiful cathedral and the once grand government buildings. The advent of the exceedingly modern buildings has not spoiled the romance and traditions of former days. It seems to us that the native life and customs continue as of old as the motorist drives about the streets of Monterrey, Mexico.

We crossed the International bridge at Laredo after visiting the American Automobile Association office and acquiring automobile insurance (\$42 including medical insurance for each passenger in the car), permits to enter a foreign country, and examination of luggage, all of which is done in a most friendly, courteous manner.

From Laredo to Monterrey the first 45 miles is one of the longest straight stretches of motor road in the world, according to the report of the AAA. Our baggage was sealed at Nuevo Laredo on the Mexican side of the river and could not be broken until two substations, one 17 miles and the other 106 miles south of the border, had been passed. The traveler is advised to tip the baggage porter one peso for every two pieces of luggage (11 ½ cents).

From Nuevo Laredo to Monterrey the highway is lined with wild flowers, cactus and shrubbery. Off in the distance is the inspiring view of the Sierra Madre mountains. There is a shrub which grows in abundance along this highway which we were told was the "Anacahuite" or coffee berry. It reminded us very much

of an azalea plant, so plentiful in California, but we saw no colors, except white, in the blossoms.

Our first encounter with the many little beggar children, so numerous in Mexico, was at Vallecillo, a few miles from the border. Where they all came from was a mystery to us, but they were there almost as soon as we paused to take a picture of one of the thatched roofed adobe houses in this old mining town of San Carlos Vallecillo. The ancient cemetery and the shrine on the hill above it gave us our first taste on this trip of the deep religious faith of most of Mexico's inhabitants.

Monterrey is the leading industrial city of the Republic. It is located in a great valley, at the foot of the Cerro de Silla, (Saddle Mountain) which is 5,703 feet above sea level. Monterrey was founded in 1596 by Don Diego de Montemayor. The narrow streets and heavy traffic require one-way streets in Monterrey. Blue and white arrows affixed to the walls of buildings on every corner indicate traffic direction. The driver must look for sign "No estacionarse" (no parking). There is no time limit for parking but cars must not be parked overnight.