

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Glamorous Guadalajara

MEXICO – There is glamour in Guadalajara. The small five page paper called “Guadalajara Tourist News” says that Guadalajara is THE “Colonial” city, the pearl and capital of the State of Jalisco. We think it is a truly beautiful city but in many ways it lacks the atmosphere of old Mexico, so much has it been modernized during the past several years.

Guadalajara is Mexico's second largest city, whose population is 378,423. The city was named for the ancient Arabic town in Spain which originally spelled its name Wad-al-had-jarah, meaning “River filled with rocks.” In 1944 a decree was passed that there would be no siesta time in Guadalajara, and so the stores are open throughout the day, contrary to the old established custom to close shop and take a rest from about 2 until 4 o'clock in most towns in Mexico.

Guadalajara is a gay city with many beautiful flower-planted plazas. Around Palacio del Gobierno (state capitol) on the main plaza, there is much modernization going on. The old cathedral has been surfaced on the front with stone to match the new stone which has been placed on all the government and city buildings facing four plazas. The four, with the buildings, form a cross with the church at the cross arms. This cathedral was begun in 1571 and consecrated in 1618. The interior is very ornate and its chief attraction is the painting, “The Assumption of the Virgin,” which hangs in the sacristy, painted by Murillo.

Aside from visiting the usual beautiful and ornate old church in Guadalajara, we spent a delightful hour or so visiting El Arte Tonalteca, which we were told was one of the finest Indian pottery works in all of Mexico. Here one could watch descendants of the Totonac Indians make a famous kind of very fragile earthenware pottery, highly glazed and decorated.

Zacatecas was our stopping place overnight on our way out of Mexico by way of Juarez. This capital of the state of Zacatecas is more than 8,000 feet elevation and believe me, when I say it was the coldest place, I am sure, of any place I have ever visited. Even our car was coated with ice the next morning. It is an historic mining town, founded in 1548, and in 1588 it received the

lengthy name of “The Very Noble and Loyal City of Our Lady of Zacatecas.”

The next large town before reaching the border is Durango, the capital of the state of Durango, with a population of 59,498. Its size is deceiving because the city is situated on a level plain formed by the foothills of the Sierra Madre, Ibarra and presumably named for Durango, Spain, where the parents of the founder Don Francisco de Ibarra, lived.

There is much here to show age and Spanish influence – the city was founded in 1563. Of course there are the usual beautiful churches, the Plaza Principal and El Cerro del Mercado, a solid hill of iron just north of the city which contains one of the largest single iron deposits in the world. The hills rises 700 feet above the surrounding plain.