

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 11, 1953

Gifts of the Jacks Sisters

Miss Margaret Jacks was unanimously elected president of the Monterey Foundation at the annual meeting of the directors and members, held last month at the home of the secretary and treasurer, Frank Work. The Jacks name has been prominent in the annuals of Monterey history since the early 1850's, but there are many new comers who probably would read with interest of some of the very admirable things that Miss Jacks and her sisters have done for the community through the years which have passed.

Miss Jacks now claims both Monterey and Palo Alto as home. She is a registered voter in Monterey, and is the owner of a charming and historic adobe home, known as the General Castro home, on the mesa back of the Del Monte golf course, where she spends a great deal of her time.

Miss Jacks is the owner of the Pacific Building, a two-story adobe building built about 1835, and used at one time as a hotel. It was acquired by David Jacks about, 1855, and in addition to the hotel, the Presbyterian Church held services there. Through the generosity of Miss Jacks, The City of Monterey now has the use of the building and the school department has offices there. Each June 3rd, Miss Jacks permits the Monterey History and Art Association to hold an annual Merienda in honor of Monterey's birthday, in the Memory Garden at the rear of the building. She also provides the huge and beautiful birthday cake for this occasion.

In 1939 Miss Jacks and her sisters, Misses Lee and Vida Jacks, deeded Casa de Ora (House of Gold) at 200 Oliver St., to the State of California as a historical monument. The building was built by Thomas O. Larkin, and was acquired by Mr. Jacks about 1855.

The building is partly constructed of chalk rock and partly of adobe brick. At present it is being restored to its original condition and will be opened to the public under the supervision of the Division of Beaches and Parks, as an early day general store. This was the use made of the building in the year 1846 and for several years thereafter, by Joseph Boston and his cousin E. L. Williams, both of whom became prominent citizens of Monterey and whose descendants still reside in various parts of this county and Santa Cruz.

Miss Jacks and her sisters have given to their native city other valuable pieces of property such as Don Dahvee Park, which borders the south side of Fremont street going up the Carmel Hill; Iris Canyon and Washerwoman's Bay, historical spots near the Monterey Peninsula College to the south side of Fremont Street. The small and beautiful lake, and extension of El Estero to the west of Via Mirada Mesa, was also a gift of the Jacks sisters to the city of their birth.

When the idea was born that Monterey should have a plaza in order that Colton Hall might have a proper setting, the Misses Jacks again came forward and give generously, that land might be acquired for such a park. When the writer first came to Monterey in 1925, there were a number of houses on the site of what is now our "Friendly Plaza" – one of Monterey's true beauty spots. Miss Jacks was also one of the large contributors to the fund raised from private citizens, to match that of the State, when the Custom House was purchased from the Federal government in 1930.

On June 7, 1898, more than 50 years ago the Monterey Chapter of the American Red Cross was organized at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Charles D. Henry, and their daughter, Miss Lou Henry, was the first temporary chairman. Miss Henry later became the wife of Herbert Hoover, and finally the First Lady of the Land. Later at the same meeting Miss Margaret Jacks became the first president of the chapter and Miss Henry the treasurer.

Miss Jacks' sister, Mrs. Mary Jacks Thomas, gave the ball park to the City of Monterey—a block square of land. A bronze tablet at the corner of Franklin and Adams Streets is inscribed: "Dedicated to Sports, February 22, 1928, Monterey Athletic Field, the gift of Mary Jacks Thomas."

Another sister, Miss Veda Jacks, bequeathed her valuable library of Californiana and other historical books, to the City of Monterey. Most of these several hundred books, all handsomely bound, are included in the collection in the California room at the new library on Pacific and Madison Streets in Monterey.

(To be continued)