

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 13, 1953

Jacks Family Lore

From Mrs. Millie Birks, a pioneer of Monterey, we have learned a great deal about the David Jacks family and their early life in Monterey. Mrs. Birks is the niece of the late Capt. J.G. Lambert, who was for 33 years the government custodian of the Old Custom House, and it was in that old adobe building that Mrs. Birks spend her girlhood.

Mrs. Birks tells us that the father of Miss Margaret Jacks, who is now the president of the Monterey Foundation, was interested in many things but one that stands out uppermost in her mind is what he did for the Sunday school and public school children on May Day.

Probably in the early part of the second half of the 1800's May Day was more of a children's holiday than it is today and Mr. Jacks remembered his childhood, and entertained the children as he had been entertained when a small boy. The setting for the picnic and entertainment was near Washerwoman's Canyon to the flat near where the College now has its bleachers, and where the Centennial Pageant was held in 1949. Mr. Jacks also had a racetrack nearby, for he was very fond of horses and had a very good stable of the best.

On the first day of May, Mr. Jacks would furnish all transportation, all the food and prizes for all the games and races, in which young and older children were urged to participate.

Mrs. Birks recalls that at the entrance to Washerwoman's Bay there was a fine garden of watercress which was well patronized by the residents of Monterey. Miss Jacks has told Mrs. Birks that the familiar plant still grows there.

Miss Margaret Jacks, president of the Foundation and a member of the board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Association, has told Mrs. Birks that her father came to Monterey on the first day of 1850, soon after his arrival in San Francisco during the last month of 1849; but some historians or researchers have said that he arrived in the spring of 1849 and worked in the Custom House in San Francisco before coming to Monterey.

Miss Jacks also relates that her father told her that he had been sent to Monterey by the government to look after a ranch the government owned below Carmel,

with instructions to find out what became of the horses and mules that had been placed there to feed. He discovered that the stock had been stolen and used to make the trip to the gold mines to the north.

Miss Jacks says, when questioned about the Methodist Campgrounds in Pacific Grove and her father's association with it. "The grounds were started about 1879 or 1880, or possibly a year earlier. It was patterned after a place in the East called Ocean Grove in New Jersey, on the coast. I imagine the place is still functioning for the same purpose for which it was started. In Pacific Grove the grounds were first fenced off and laid out in small lots with tent frames on some of them. The lots were 30-foot frontage by 60 feet deep. No vehicles were allowed inside the fenced off portion, and those in attendance at the meetings were supposed to walk back and forth to their living quarters.

"The frames were covered with canvas after the rains were over, and in the fall the canvas was removed again. Some lots were larger because people bought them and built houses on them. They, the people, used to come to the grounds and spend a month or two with their families to get away from the hot weather of the interior valleys.

"Later on, the Chautauqua used go hold activities there, giving lectures and conducting studies. Also, there was a session of the Methodist Church. My father opened a restaurant for the people who did not have housekeeping accommodations and some of his clergymen friends ran this welcome feature of the grounds for him."

The whole undertaking gave Mr. Jacks a lot of worry, according to Miss Margaret Jacks, and he was glad to sell it to the Pacific Improvement Company. A portion of El Carmelo Cemetery, a grant from David Jacks, was set aside for the graves of Methodist ministers and their families, according to a reference in Piney Paradise by Dr. Lucy Neely McLane.

Mrs. Birks recalls that in her girlhood when the Christmas holidays rolled around, the Jacks home was always open and there was always an abundance of refreshments—candy, fruit, and other good things for anyone who came to the door, man, woman or child. She fondly remember Mrs. Jacks as a very kind and lovable person.