

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Restoring Mission Soledad

Some day in the not too distant future we may have the pleasure of seeing Mission Nuestra de la Soledad restored to her former appearance when it was founded by Father Fermin de Lasuen Oct. 9, 1791. That is the hope of the Native Daughters of the Golden West, who as a measure of devotion and service have pledged themselves to underwrite \$3,000 for the restoration of this historic and holy landmark.

Already this worthwhile organization of women who were born in California, have been able to accumulate a bit over \$12,000 in their state treasury for this worthy project. When Junipero Parlor of Monterey met recently, in the Masonic temple, in Pacific Grove to officially receive a visit from the State president of the order, Mrs. Clyde Dyke, a member of the local parlor, \$160 was presented to her for the Mission Soledad Restoration Fund.

Today Soledad is the only Mission in the chain of 21 Missions completely unrestored. It is situated 30 miles south of Monterey not far from the town of Soledad, where it presents a sad sight indeed. The planned construction will be authentic, and portray, in its simple austerity the true Mission spirit and beauty, according to the State officers of the Native Daughters.

It is hoped that a start on partial restoration of the chapel may be made soon after the fall rains of 1953, with other work to progress as funds are available.

Mission Nuestra de la Soledad, named for "Our Lady of Solitude" was the 13th in the chain of missions. While not a large or pretentious structure, it served as an important link and contributed greatly to the Salinas Valley area until the Secularization Act was enacted in 1834.

History tells us of the devoted service of such outstanding men as Fathers Diego, Garcia, Jose Espi, Florencio Ibanez, and Vincente Francisco de Sarria.

There are several very important persons buried at Soledad Mission. Gov. Arrillaga, the first Spanish Governor of California, passed away at Soledad in July of 1814, and was buried in the center of the original church. Father Ibanez followed his friend in death four years later, Nov. 1818, and was buried in the church beneath the sanctuary, next to the altar steps. It is

planned that suitable markers should be erected over these graves.

Soledad Mission buildings have almost disappeared through the years, and only some of the foundations now remain where once stood an important Mission in the fertile valley selected under the administration of Father Lasuen.

The Native Daughters of the Golden West throughout the State of California at their 1950 Grand Parlor session, passed a resolution requesting \$1.00 per member voluntary contribution, in order to achieve the goal of complete restoration of Soledad Mission in Monterey County. Thirty-four parlors of Native Daughters in the State, have paid up one hundred percent, which means that each and every member has paid their dollar toward this worthy project – the restoration of the second mission within our county. Junipero Parlor is not among the Parlors listed, nor is the Salinas Parlor, but Fort Bragg, Mt. Lassen, San Francisco, Palo Alto, Sebastopol, Berkeley and many others are sufficiently interested in the preservation of a Mission in Monterey County to contribute to their utmost to make the dream a realization.