

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 28, 1953

'An Evening With The Irish Poets'

There appeared in the "Territorial Enterprise and Virginia City News," the weekly newspaper in this historical city in Nevada, a bit of news concerning two important personages in California which we believe is worth reprinting in Monterey, for both play an important part in the past and future history of the Peninsula. These men are Newton Drury, chief of the State Division of Beaches and Parks, and Joseph Knowland, chairman of the State Park's Commission and publisher of the Oakland Tribune. Mr. Drury came back to California after serving a number of years as head of the National Park System, and Mr. Knowland, a native son, is a past grand president of the Native Sons of the Golden West.

The Enterprise captioned a photograph of the Californians and their wives as follows: "Distinguished visitors to Virginia City shown lunching last Sunday at the Comstock House were Joseph Knowland owner of the Oakland Tribune and Mrs. Knowland and Mr. and Mrs. Newton Drury, son of the late Wells Drury, famed editor of the Territorial Enterprise in bonanza times and author of "An Editor on the Comstock Lode." Mr. Knowland, in addition to being owner of the Tribune, is father of United States Senator William F. Knowland, majority leader in the Senate and successor to the authority of the late Senator Robert Taft.

"After lunch the quartet visited Piper's Opera and The Delta where Eddie Colletti was able to show Mr. Drury a paragraph concerning his father from the Virginia City Daily Stage for January 19, 1879. 'Sam Davis (late editor of the Carson Appeal) and Wells Drury were guests at the Au Fait Ball in Carson City the other evening', read the squib. Sam appeared in Otto Greenwood's swallowtail, a pair of clump-bottom brogans, a 14 collar on a 16 neck and with his hair scrambled a la Sitting Bull. Drury it is said wore a pair of Bill Gibson's broadcloth pants and a double breasted cravat – the two being "the observed of all observers'."

Seventy-five years ago – September 5, 1878 – a headline in the Virginia City, Nevada, newspaper "An Evening With The Irish Poets". The story related "Men get so shock-run-mad once in awhile in this country that it is a good thing for some one to come among them occasionally who can charm them back to their better

selves. That man is here now, and will deliver a lecture in Piper's Opera House Saturday night, taking as a theme the heading of this item. Daniel O'Connell needs no eulogium at our hands. His name and fame as a poet and a humorist have come on before him, and we predict that crowds will follow after and hear what he has to say."

California and Monterey claim Daniel O'Connell. He was the author of the poem "In the Mantel of Old Tradition" which appears on the monument in front of Colton Hall and the first verse of which is on the door of California's First Theater. He was born in Ireland and came to San Francisco in 1870. In 1874 Daniel O'Connell married a Monterey girl, Miss Anita Ashley, and after that much of his life was spent in and about the Old Capital. He was one of the organizers of the Bohemian Club and gave it its name.

His great granddaughter, Miss Diana Davison, was one of the attendants to La Favorita at Monterey's 183rd birthday Merienda on last June 3rd, sponsored by the Monterey History and Art Association.

Henry B. Collins, former curator at the Stevenson House in Monterey and a member of the local parlor of the Native Sons of the Golden West, has recently received a commendation from the Shasta Historical Society, Inc. Collins was the first curator named to the historical museum in the pioneer Shasta County Courthouse, which is under the jurisdiction of the State Division of Beaches and Parks. He held the position for three years before he was transferred to his present position as an assistant curator at Sutter's Fort, Sacramento.

The Shasta historical landmark contains a \$100,000 art collection donated by Mrs. Mae Helene Bacon Boggs. The Native Sons donated the property to the State and the people of the area are taking an active interest in the project which was the center of activity during the Gold Rush. The courthouse was dedicated on June 12, 1950, during the Shasta Centennial celebration.