

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 4, 1953

'Early Monterey'

Now available in the three California State Historical Monuments in Monterey, which includes the Old Custom House, California's First Theater and the Stevenson House, is a small, well written and illustrated brochure. The booklet will be a great help to tourists to both find the historic sites and buildings and to learn the correct history of each of them.

Published by the Division of Beaches and Parks, at the California State Printing Office in Sacramento, the first page cover presents a drawing of the Vizcaino-Portola-Serra Landing Place and "Early Monterey" from an old print. Listed are the five sites and buildings now owned by the State of California in Monterey: Serra Landing, Custom House, California's First Theater, Stevenson House and Casa Del Oro. The story begins on the second page.

"Monterey reflects other flags, other ways. ... Monterey retains many eloquent reminders of its past as the capital of the Spanish, Mexican and early United States regimes of Alta California. Important among these are its historic sites and structures. Preserved, their stories will serve as source of inspiration for generations to come."

Listed among the historic buildings and sites of Monterey are: Serra Landing Place, First Theater, Casa Del Oro (Boston Store); Stevenson House, Colton Hall (Museum upstairs, owned by the City of Monterey); Old Pacific Building (Restored by the Jacks Family in 1925) and Memory Garden; Royal Presidio Chapel of San Carlos de Borromeo, founded by Father Serra in 1770; Casa Alvarado, built by Juan Bautista Alvarado in 1834 and occupied by him while governor of California (not open to the public); Larkin House, built in 1835 by Thomas Oliver Larkin for his residence and store, the American Consulate in the 1840s, (not open to the public). Other surviving historic Monterey buildings are listed, as well as a map of Monterey showing the Historic Route and numbered buildings as prepared by the Division of Beaches and Parks.

The story as written of Monterey, the Old Pacific Capital, is worthy of repetition in this column, because we believe it to be historically correct and because it

condenses the fascinating story so it can be read with interest within a few moments.

"Juan Rodriquez, Portuguese navigator sailing for Spain in 1542 was the first white man to sight the California coast. Sixty years later he was followed by Sebastian Vizcaino, who was sent to find a suitable harbor for Manila galleons sailing back to the Philippines. He found one, which he names "Monterey" in honor of the County of Monterrey, Viceroy of New Spain.

"Many years passed before Spain was able to start colonization in California. On June 3, 1770, more than 200 years after Cabrillo, Don Gaspar de Portola, with Fray Junipero Serra, landed where Vizcaino had at Monterey Bay. After setting up a simple altar under an oak tree, and with ritual and pomp, they founded the Presidio and Mission of San Carlos de Borromeo. Their landing site is now a State Historical Monument.

"Mexico obtained her independence from Spain in 1821, and for 25 years the Mexican flag flew over Monterey, the capital since 1776. The town expanded beyond the old presidio walls; and seafaring men from New England modified the Spanish colonial style. This resulted in the "Monterey Architecture," so popular in many parts of our country, of which the Larkin House is considered to be the prototype. The Mexican government built the Custom House, among other public buildings; comfortable, white-washed adobe houses dotted the hills; the stores lined the crooked streets. Visitors were charmed by the picturesque beauty of the pueblo.

"Today, under the United States Flag, many of the old buildings have disappeared, but through the cooperation of individuals, patriotic groups, the City, and the State of California, fine examples are preserved for the enjoyment of all."