

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 12, 1954

Monterey's 184th Birthday

Monterey will be 184 years old on June 3, 1854. To celebrate this historic anniversary the Monterey History and Art Assn. will sponsor the annual birthday Merienda in Memory Garden at the Old Pacific Building.

The occasion will mark the 184th anniversary of the landing on Monterey's shores of Don Gaspar de Portola and Padre Junipero Serra. On June 3, 1770, Portola planted the standard of Spain here, claiming this area in the name of King Carlos III. He established the Presidio of Monterey and the first mass was celebrated by Father Serra.

The constitution of the Monterey History and Art Assn. lists the purposes of the organization as three-fold: To promote interest in the history of the county, to protect its historic sites, buildings and landmarks, to assist in the identification of points of historic interest and when deemed advisable, to erect suitable markers or monuments.

Under the heading "To promote interest in the history of Monterey" would come the sponsorship of the annual Merienda held on the city's birthday. At the first meeting of about 40 interested individuals residing on the Monterey Peninsula, held in the Old Custom House on Jan. 19, 1931, the plans were tentatively laid for the first Merienda which was held that year in Memory Garden, through the courtesy of the Misses Lee, Margaret and Vida Jacks, the owners of the Pacific Building. Each succeeding birthday celebration has been held in this lovely enclosed garden.

From the 40 original members the association grew during the first year to 128, according to the first annual report given by Col. Roger S. Fitch, the first president, who is still a member of the board of directors.

The present board of directors of the History and Art Assn. is sponsoring the 1954 Merienda on June 3rd. A barbecued luncheon will be served at noon, followed by Jose Manero and his presentation of "La Verbena de Monterey," a program of Spanish music, dancing and singing. There will be strolling musicians to wander in the garden during the luncheon and delight the guests with typical Spanish melodies.

Memory Garden is unusually beautiful and colorful just now. The roses are in full bloom and the annuals are

blossoming. The growth of all the trees and shrubs is noticeable to those who have attended Meriendas for the last 20 years as we have done, but the beauty of the setting never changes. During the first few years the magnolias and the orange trees were mere infants while now, when the day is warm, the guests may find shade under the branches.

The menu for the Merienda will include the barbecued steaks, the cooking of which is in the hands of a number of experts; Spanish beans cooked by local housewives from old time recipes, delicious mixed green salad, traditional garlic bread and coffee, prepared in the garden under the direction of Army chefs on field kitchen equipment loaned for the occasion by Fort Ord.

The climax of the feast will be the cutting of Monterey's huge birthday cake, the traditional gift of Miss Margaret Jacks. The identity of La Favorita, her attendants and Duenna will be announced soon.