

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 21, 1954

A Letter From Mexico

The second annual conference of the California Historical Societies, sponsored and aided by the California History Foundation of the College of the Pacific, will be held, as it was last year, in Columbia. This old historic Mother Lode town is now a historical monument owned by the State of California and administered by the Division of Beaches and Parks.

The conference will start with an informal evening in the garden of the summer home of Dr. Robert E. Burns, president of the College of the Pacific, on Friday. The following day sessions will be held in Columbia's Presbyterian Church.

Clyde Arbuckle of the San Jose Landmarks Commission will discuss the correcting of county histories, and Ben Dixon of the San Diego Historical Society will tell of plans for the centennial of the Overland Mail on Friday Evening. Another subject to be taken up during Saturday's program will be "Historical Society Publications," which will take the form of a panel discussion by Glen Dawson, Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles; Phil Townsend Hanna, editor of Westways; Theron Fox of the Rosicrucian Press, San Jose, and George Schrader, editor of the Siskiyou County Historical Society Foundation.

Before luncheon Richard Bailey of the Kern County Historical Society, will speak on "Interesting Young People in Local History."

In the afternoon Mrs. May Perry, curator, Placer County Museum, will explain how a "county museum functions on a small budget." A tour of Columbia Historic State Park will follow the business meeting. In the evening there will be a special performance in the Fallon House Theater given by the College of the Pacific Theater group.

Mrs. Mary Greene, curator of the Old Custom House in Monterey has been asked to take part in a panel discussion during the session.

An enthusiastic letter has arrived from Mr. and Mrs. Guy Curtis who left here several weeks ago to tour Mexico by motor. It is the second trip south of the border for Mr. Curtis and the third for Mrs. Curtis and their interest in the country is still unbounded.

Their address on July 12 was "Posada de la Presa," in San Cristobal Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, staying with Frans Blom and Gertrude DUBY de Blom. They were the only guests and reported that they were living as kings with three meals the like of which was fantastic and GOOD and the total charge was 50 pesos or \$4.00 a day.

San Cristobal, Chiapas, was as far south as they were able to go on the Pan American Highway. The elevation there is 7,300 ft. The nights are cold, days from about 9 to 4:30 o'clock are warm, reports the travelers, and sometimes there is a little rain in the late afternoon. There are very few tourists, a big market and trading stores for the Indians.

Hundreds of different costumes makes the country very colorful. As usual in Mexico there are plenty of flowers, corn and fruit growing everywhere, few automobiles and because the highway opened only five years ago, the town and country are not spoiled by North Americans yet, Mr. Curtis wrote in his letter.

"We have been over some terrible roads to Indian villages but mostly stay on the highways where the roads are good, gas is about 18 cents U.S. per gallon and there are enough service (gas) stations so you do not have to carry gas with you!

"The road up here from Tuxla Gutierrez elevation is about 1,700 feet, in 53 miles it climbs to nearly 7,300 and is one continuous curve and one magnificent view of the mountains all of the 53 miles. We have never seen anything like it."

Mr. and Mrs. Curtis expect to be in Toluca at the Colonial Hotel today, July 21. There Mr. Curtis will attend Rotary Club and take in the market which is said to be the largest in Mexico. They report that both are well, have had no car trouble and are about to head again north, stopping at the places they picked out on their drive south and by easy stages expect to arrive back in Monterey shortly after Sept 1.

A page of a Florence, Italy, newspaper, which has been forwarded to us from Mrs. N. Wither who has been traveling abroad for several weeks, tells of a flower show which she attended in that city.

The story relates that the local authorities had turned Florence into a garden. Pietro Bargellini, a well known writer and alderman of the city, directed the slow transformation of the narrow streets, squares and frowning medieval palaces. Flowers, azaleas in bloom

and other kinds of plants had been placed everywhere to make the city look more beautiful. Mrs. Wither wrote that everywhere there were tulips, lilies, wisterias, and roses rambling on the severe facades of the historical monuments and that the garden club there is called the Society "Amici dei Fiori" (Friends of Flowers).

"I could stay years in Florence" is the final word from Mrs. Wither.