

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Our Chinese 'Invasion'

The story goes back to 1875 when a fleet of Chinese war junks set out to attack California. News had reached the emperor in Peking that thousands of Chinese who had gone to California to work on the railroads were being cruelly mistreated, and the outraged emperor resolved to teach the United States a lesson it would not soon forget.

Eastward bound for Monterey sailed seven junks armed with brass cannon. The emperor, however, not realizing the size of the Pacific, had not sufficiently provisioned the fleet and before the voyage was half over the sailors faced death from thirst. Just in time a rainstorm came; quickly the sails were lowered and used as troughs to catch the rain.

At last the doughty fleet reached Monterey; 50 gunners stood by their places ready to blast the city if it put up a fight. But far from resisting, the people of Monterey were so delighted with this unexpected visit of war junks that the whole town came down to welcome the invaders. The pigtailed warriors, overwhelmed with hospitality, liked California so much that they refused to go home. The older men got jobs on the railroads, and the younger ones stayed on in Monterey as fishermen. The seven junks were ultimately broken up and burned.

This fascinating story has been told many times but we fail to find any authentication or any further details. In a file marked "Legends" at the Monterey Library we found a letter from John Hix of a newspaper feature known as "Strange as It Seems," dated July 29, 1940, in which he asks for information concerning the story. A few days ago the library received another letter from an author who is writing a book and wanted to verify the story. So the legend lives on.

About 1906 there was published a souvenir magazine in Monterey, "being a frank, fair, and accurate exposition, pictorially and otherwise, of this magnificent section of California...." It was compiled by G.H. Chrisman and published by the Monterey Cypress.

A facsimile of the edition of the Cypress on May 30, 1906, is used as a frontispiece. The only local news item on that front page is a story on the graduation of nine students from the Monterey Union High School to be held in the Work Theater on the evening of June 2. "This

is the first class to ever graduate from the Monterey High School and consists of five boys and four girls," an interesting observance of the reporter of that year.

"The feature of the evening will be the presentation of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' by the graduates assisted by other pupils. The faculty of the high school have allowed the pupils to issue invitations to the play and commencement but owing to the capacity of the theater the invitations have been cut to one-half of the original number."

The El Carmelo Hotel of Pacific Grove in a photograph follows an old-time picture of Hotel Del Monte. "It is in its charm of setting, its finish and appointment, its equipment and service, a miniature Del Monte," according to the caption beneath the photograph.

Writing of the undeveloped "Empire of Central California" the editor declares: "Sixty thousand acres of land capable of raising from 20 to 50 bushels of grain to the acre of land cannot help but become a seat of population in any civilized country. The county's rich bottom lands will grow anything from cereals to sub-tropical fruits."

Under the heading "Historic" there are early-day photographs of Chinese shell dealers, Point Lobos, First Theatre in California, San Carlos Church, Wreck of the St. Paul, Washington Hotel, the residence of Frank L. Ordway, and his drugstore on the corner of Franklin and Alvarado streets; the "Alta Vista" an adobe building which was replaced by the Telephone Co. building. David Jacks' residence, Casa Los Ollas, the residence of James A. Murray, destroyed to build a cannery on Cannery Row; Monterey Opera House, Hotel Caspar, now the Mission Inn, before all the modern changes had been made; and the Pacific Ocean House declared to be the "best conducted hotel to be found in Monterey County."

The Sherman Rose cottage is pictured behind its walled garden as it stood before the First National Bank was built on the site of this old adobe. The Monterey High School is shown as a square two-story wooden building with a two-story tower and a flagpole. There is a story about the Monterey-Pacific Grove street railway system, illustrated with a picture of the power house. The charge for a ride between the two cities was five cents.

The booklet ends with a description of the beauties and advantages to be had in Pacific Grove. "Pacific Grove,

one of the most healthful, equable, all-the-year seaside resorts in the world, was founded in the year 1875 by David Jacks and representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Every desirable factor of home life is here – climate, health, moral and intellectual surroundings, and good society.”

The old-time book was loaned to us by Charles M. Sutliff.