

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Monterey in 1882**

In the October issue of Harper's magazine, published in October 1882, an unknown author wrote this: "The conception has gone out about the country, of which it is my pleasure to speak, that it is an earthly paradise. I declare for my part, that it is charming; but at the first blush it is an earthly paradise very unlike the best idea of it one has been able to attain by a good deal of previous investigation."

It was amusing and yet true the statement which our writer of 73 years ago claimed for California and being asked about the land of perpetual sunshine: "So we are," he replied, "but that does not necessarily mean perpetual verdure without a more liberal use of water in irrigation than we have yet been able to arrive at. But look at the thermometer! Look at the fertility of the land! Nothing is scarce with us but water."

And then the Californian added, with a dignity well justified by the facts of the case: "California sets up to be a land which by the enormous extent of its relations, commercial, agricultural, mineral, and social, has become a power in the world. It has revolutionized values, struck the keynote of the new social conditions, and is to be the point of departure of a new commercial era in a trade with the Orient and the isles of the sea, the extent of which no man can estimate."

We must interrupt our story teller at this point and tell our readers about the illustrations in this Harper's New Monthly Magazine article on California. Etchings of old Monterey, seven in number, were beautifully drawn by Joseph D. Strong of Monterey. Strong was an enthusiastic young artist living here at the time Robert Louis Stevenson came to join Mrs. Fanny Osborne, who later became his wife. He married Stevenson's stepdaughter, Isobel Osborne, the author of "This Life I've Loved," who died in Santa Barbara a couple of years ago. Before her death she had presented her collection of Stevensonian, including first editions of his writings, manuscripts, pictures, personal and household possessions of the famous author and his wife, to the Stevenson House in Monterey. There these articles may be seen by all who are interested in Stevenson and his writings.

There is a charming view of the intersection of Alvarado and Calle Principal with the Custom House and the bay in the distance, another of the old Pacific Building with a stairway leading from the southern balcony to the garden behind an adobe wall. A cow, a Chinese man and a horse and wagon appear to be on their way to the Custom House. Above the latter picture is a drawing of a cannon on the hill at the Presidio, still showing the Custom House as the center of attraction. A Chinese fishing village, picturing fish nets, cabins, and drying fish, is of interest. The whaling industry is shown in a sketch of a whale drawn up on the beach with men working over the huge animal, while another carcass is floating in the bay. An unusual drawing shows the Carmel Mission with but a partial roof, during a service on St. Charles' Day when a group of Indians have come to hear the Mass.

After describing visits to San Jose, Santa Cruz and way places, the author brings us to Monterey: "Thence we come down finally to the old Spanish capital of Monterey. Here at last is something to commend from the point of view of the picturesque, without mental reservation. Monterey has a population which still, in considerable part, speaks Spanish only, and retains the impress of the Spanish domination, and little else.

"When one is told in his own country that anybody with whom he is about to have dealings 'does not speak English,' he infers naturally that it is brokenly, or only a little. But at Monterey it means absolutely not a word. There are Spanish signs on the shops, and Spanish advertisements, as the "Wheeler and Wilson Maquinas a Coser", on the fences." And that was only 73 years ago!

Even in that three quarters of a century ago stories were told, and statements printed like the one that follows: " 'Las rosas son muy secas' (the roses are very dry), says the Senorita Cualquiera, apologetically, as we enter her little garden, laid out in numerous equal parallelograms, behind an adobe wall topped with red tiles. We have come to call, and to admire, though they are falling to pieces, in the wind, the large yellow and red roses, and her long low white adobe house.

"She is one of those who speak no English. It seems as if it were some willful perversity, after all these years (since 1846) of having been a part of the most bustling state of the most active country in the world. It seems as if it must be some lingering hatred of the American invader. But the senorita is far too gentle and friendly in

her manners to be suspected of that. Whatever the reason be, if there is any beyond the mental apathy through which the Mexican survivors have suffered all their property interest, it is not hatred.”