

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Museum Conference

We find that travel, besides being educational, is also distressingly revealing. When our memory carries us back several years and we remember when San Diego was small and beautiful and it was comparatively easy to drive out to Old Town and find the historic spots, or over to Coronado with ease, it is disappointing to find that that place has also changed and those nostalgic remembrances are no longer with us. There is always a rush through traffic, no stop period to look at historic markers (might as well not be there), glaring advertising lights at night, one-way streets and freeways. What will the next dozen years bring?

Nevertheless we enjoyed our stay as the guests of the southern city as we attended the Conference of Western Museums in Balboa Park. This park is a historic spot in itself for it was built as the setting for the 1915 Panama California International Exposition. It is a gem of a park, a haven of rest, beautiful in its architecture and in the upkeep of the buildings and the grounds. We remarked that it was so fortunate that the buildings had been so constructed for the fair that they were still beautiful forty years after that colorful event passed into history—but that was not true. The buildings had been constructed as temporary quarters for the exhibits—all except the Art Museum—but San Diego had had so much pride in Balboa Park that throughout the years much money has been spent upon their preservation and all of them are used for the pleasure and education of residents and visitors. Too bad San Francisco did not feel the same about the buildings and gardens built on the Marina for its 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. At least we wish that the Fine Arts buildings could have been preserved along with the garden and lagoon.

All the meetings of the conference were held in the Puppet Theater in the Park, except a few sectional meetings, one of which we attended in the Serra Historical Museum Library in Old Town, San Diego. There were luncheons, dinners, cocktails parties and tours provided for the members. At a dinner in the Zoo the main course on the menu was buffalo steak and the program was given by the curator of reptiles who declared as he showed pictures of his charges that "reptiles are interesting." Another interesting affair was

given in the Jungle Hall of the Museum of Man preceding the dinner.

There was the serious part of the conference going on each day from 9 a.m. to 5 in the evening with talks, movies, and slides given by museum directors and curators of prominence in the west, including history, art and science museums, all of which were represented at the annual affair.

The Zoo delighted us. We were taken by buses with the driver, well versed in his subject, giving the stories of the animals as we progressed along the winding roads, pausing for a few moments before each cage or exhibit in the 200 acres of lush semi-tropical landscaped mesas and canyons. There, we were told the San Diego Zoo proudly exhibits one of the largest wild animal collections in the world. More than 3,200 mammals, birds and reptiles, representing 862 different species, are exhibited the year round in outdoor enclosures. We think the amusing little penguins had modern air conditioning for their home seemed to be at least partially glass-enclosed.

Reports of the Western Museum Conference were given at the Nov. 7 regular meeting of the board of directors of the Monterey History and Art Assn., held in the Pacific Building. There were also reports of the various committees and regular business reports.