

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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News from Serra's Birthplace

First hand news of the laying of the cornerstone for the museum to be built in Petra on the Island of Mallorca, the birthday place of Father Junipero Serra, to house the documents and relics of his revered priest who founded the California Mission chain, has arrived in Monterey.

Mrs. George Seitz, widow of Commander Seitz, has sent back to her California friends her impressions of the ceremony which marked the historic event on first of March in far off Mallorca. Mrs. Seitz has visited the peninsula many times and has many friends here including Admiral and Mrs. R. Kelley Turner of Monterey, who kindly supplied the letter which we are using today tell our readers about the island, its people and the museum dedication.

Mrs. Seitz describes Mallorca as being full of interest and that she has not yet exhausted the lovely spots to go to in her off moments, between siesta hours, and social life. Then she writes: "What do you think! I had my picture in the Spanish paper day before yesterday. The occasion was the laying of the cornerstone for the museum near Father Serra's birthplace in the village of Petra on this island. I was invited by Mrs. Dina Moore Bowden, the one who has been working on all this restoration in the memory of the Father of California Missions."

Mrs. Bowden is former Californian, now a resident of Mallorca. Many of those who saw her exhibit of the crafts and handwork of her adopted land held in Colton Hall and also in Carmel in April, 1949, will remember this delightful woman. Her project was a real "labor of love" at that time, its purpose being to share her pleasure with others and perhaps, to inspire more interest among Californians in the people and the culture of the Mediterranean island whence came Junipero Serra. She carried graphs, relics and historic information which will undoubtedly be included in the museum exhibits.

Mrs. Seitz writes that Mrs. Bowden had adopted her and "It is very nice for me as she is one of the leaders here and awfully nice. We drove to Petra and found the village all decorated and it was a holiday for all. From every balcony hung a bright colored spread and flags of

Spain, the U.S. and California all around us. We were honored guest besides ourselves were the civil governor and the minister of archives and libraries of Madrid.

"They all made flowery speeches and then a glass of the most delicious wine at the town hall. I had been there once before and had made friends with a little girl who wore her hair like I do. To my amazement 20 of the children were doing my hair-do, some of the braids only reaching half way up their heads. I found myself with a little bodyguard of children who escorted me as we went from one ceremony to another. I bought a lot of candy and gave it to them and they were all on hand to wave me off in the bus."

The Mallorcans are so simple and sweet and this adds so much to the picture according to our correspondent. She goes on to say that the country is so beautiful and that it reminds her of the Monterey Peninsula or the best of Honolulu.

"Last week I was invited to meet Count Luknow, the German admiral of World War I, who raided allied shipping with a schooner disguised as a Norwegian and when searched by the British had a member of the crew dressed up as his wife. He was finally interned in Australia. He is here with his very attractive wife and they are living in their trailer which is causing a sensation in Palma. I am invited to tea there on Tuesday.

"It is most entertaining," Mrs. Seitz writes, "The varied types one meets of all nationalities. Last night I was at a party and met an American writer from Fiji, who played the guitar beautifully and his Samoan wife and daughter were so pretty and danced the native dances for me. So you see it is a lot of fun to be here."

Hours are so different in Mallorca, according to the letter, for lunch is at 2 o'clock, tea at 5 or 6 o'clock and dinner at 9 or 10. Breakfast is generally served around 10 a.m. All the stores close from 1 until 4 o'clock and people shop until 7 o'clock in the evening. Everybody sips tea at the sidewalk cafes. "I am enjoying it so much that I shall not go onto the continent this year, but return to the United States in late May and then later head for the West Coast," writes Mrs. Seitz.