

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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El Toro Bridge

In 1929 the board of supervisors of Monterey County completed a concrete bridge over El Toro Creek on the Monterey Salinas highway. The realignment of the highway had placed the new bridge probably 100 feet from old road, making new construction necessary.

We understand of the two bridges (both bridges are still standing) there was a wooden bridge, used in the horse and buggy days and when the first automobiles traveled the Monterey and Salinas highway.

As the newest bridge was nearing completion an agreement was reached among the supervisors that a bronze tablet should be placed on it bearing the names of the men who were members of the board in 1929, the county clerk and the engineer, together with the date of construction. After due consideration it was decided that Jo Mora, an artist, a Californian by adoption, resident of the Monterey Peninsula by choice and a historian by avocation, should be the designer of the marker. Mora accepted the commission.

The story of the plaque, as passed down during the 26 years that have lapsed since the bronze plaque was placed on the bridge, relates that the committee which contacted Jo Mora, the artist, asked that the likenesses of all the members of the board be represented, along with the county clerk and engineer, on the marker. Mora agreed and started work upon the important project.

When finished plaque appeared it was amusing as well as historically correct, for the artist had shown his sense of humor as well as his knowledge of the subject concerned. He had included the name of the bridge: "El Toro Creek Bridge," the date of its construction; the titles of "Los Supervisors de Monterey County": H.E. Abbott, A.A. Caruthers, George Dudley, R.A. Stirling, and D.P. Abbott. Standing side by side the left of the supervisors are C.F. Joy, clerk, and H.F. Cozzens, engineer.

In the lower right hand corner of the cast bronze is the name of E. Hommensen, contractor, and a plan of the drawing of the bridge. Above this decoration are amusing bas reliefs of a massive bull garbed in a kerchief about his neck, trousers in the manner of Spanish fashion, and holding in his raised right hoof a

low-crowned, broad brimmed hat, called a "poblanos," according to the artist, El Toro is making a deep bow to the supervisors in thanks for the new bridge over the stream of water which has been named in his honor. Behind him is Mrs. Bull, also dressed in Spanish fashion with mantilla, full skirt and Spanish fan in her upraised hoof. At her side is Baby Bull, also of unmistakable Spanish ancestry.

According to instruction Mora had put all the participants on this bridge project upon the historic plaque but they all shared equal recognition, for all five supervisors, the clerk and engineer have their backs turned, all are identical in dress after the Spanish tradition, all wear the same broad-brimmed, flat-crowned hats, all are holding hands in friendly fashion as they appear to be dancing a dance of the day. Joy and Cozzens are dancing together.

Claude Faw of Carmel has been amused by the plaque for a number of years as he crossed the bridge on his travels to carry on his duties as representative of the Central Coast Counties for the State Highway Commission and as liaison man appointed by the board of supervisors for Monterey County highways.

When Mr. Faw saw that vandals were attempting to pry the plaque from the concrete into which it has been set, he spoke to the Monterey History and Art Assn., as a member of the board of directors, of the historic origin of the plaque and advised that it be preserved in a safer place than the bridge.

Recently E.J.L. Peterson, district engineer of the division of highways, and the Monterey County Board of Supervisors agreed to remove the plaque from El Toro Bridge and give it into the keeping of the Monterey History and Art Assn.

The supervisors of Monterey County in 1929 came from: Salinas, District 2, Abbott, District 1, Pajaro, Stirling; District 3, King City, Talbott; District 4, San Ardo, Dudley, and District 5, Monterey, Carruthers, Joy and Cozzens were both from Salinas.

Jo Mora the artist, was a native of Uruguay. He came to the United States as a child, became a cartoonist on Boston newspapers, and then drifted into the Southwest where he became interested in the American cowboy and Indian life. He became a versatile artist of Western life, illustrator and later winning renown with his beautifully exulted and historically accurate dioramas, perhaps the best known of which are the

series depicting the life of Will Rogers, done for the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore, Okla. He died on the Monterey Peninsula Oct. 10, 1947. His home and studio were at Pebble Beach.