

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Santa Fe and Taos

We greatly admire the way in which Santa Fe and Taos in New Mexico have preserved the ancient atmosphere of their cities. One sees no glaring signs or ultra-modern architecture; the streets have not been widened to provide for the constant stream of visitors who arrive daily to enjoy all the interesting things that the two communities are proud to preserve and show to their appreciative audience from all parts of the world.

There are several museums in Santa Fe. One, the Museum of Art, housed in a large building of Indian design, has a very valuable collection of Western and Indian paintings on exhibit in the gallery, as well as many historic items. In the Governor's Palace, a block from the art gallery, there is a well-arranged exhibit of the life and work of the Navajo Indians of that part of the United States. Many schools of the State of New Mexico take advantage of the educational value of the exhibits and transport entire classes and schools to view it.

Another fine collection of items important to the history of New Mexico and Santa Fe is housed in the Governor's Palace and in the rooms off the patio of this old adobe. We made a complete tour of all the rooms and studied the exhibits and items which might be of future value to the museums of Monterey. In Santa Fe, the Indians have cooperated with the curators and historians in both the historical accuracy and in the arrangement of the various items of handicraft, art, customs, and clothing of their people, all of which makes the displays more interesting and valuable to the visitors.

The United States post office is one of the most attractive buildings in Santa Fe. We were told that the post office department in Washington and its architects eagerly cooperated with the citizens of Santa Fe when they asked that the department observe the wishes of the community in architectural control of all buildings within the city limits and make use of the Indian pueblo design.

We pondered upon the reason why Santa Fe has no passenger traffic into or out of the city, although the Santa Fe Railroad company runs freight trains into the city. The passengers are conveyed by bus to a depot in a very small community a few miles away. To satisfy our

curiosity we called upon the company's office and asked for the reason and were told by one of the executives that in the early days when the Santa Fe was planning to enter the city of that name, the people fought the idea, the prices skyrocketed, and there was much displeasure manifested over the idea of having train service. So, the company gave up the project and to this day runs only freight trains over the original right-of-way.

From Santa Fe we motored to Taos, a delightful trip over the mountains and along the Rio Grande river. Here at the foot of their sacred mountain, Sangre de Cristo, the Taos Indians have dwelt - no one knows how long. Artist, writers, forest rangers, business folk and pleasure seekers share the stage with the Indians today, where 400 years ago they watched conquistadores, padres, colonists from Spain, French trappers, and traders, mountain men, scouts, soldiers, and prospectors play their role.

We made a further trip to Taos Pueblo, located 2.8 miles north of Taos, where the largest of the many storied communal type of pueblo in the world is located. There we saw many of the old Indians in native dress. The men were covered with blankets, even over their heads. We saw others without their heads covered and observed their long hair, parted in the middle with a braided pigtail on each side, into which was woven colored cloth or black satin. The entire pueblo was exceptionally clean we observed and remarked that there was apparently no need for a "Litter-bug" sticker there.

In the windows of several of the gift or curio shops in Taos we observed collections of Staurolites, or "crosses where the fairies danced." We were told that these crosses are picked up in the mountains near Pilar, New Mexico. In their natural forms, they are a native brown to black silicate of iron and aluminum in prismatic crystal twined to form a cross. In the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, the crosses are called Fairy Crosses, and are worn as good-luck tokens. Teddy Roosevelt wore one of these crosses as a watch fob, and Woodrow Wilson carried one with him always, we read in the Taos guidebook.

A few of the natives, it is said, quote the lovely legend connected with the Blue Ridge Mountain crosses. The legend says that when Christ was crucified, a bluebird brought the sad message to the wood nymphs whose tears fell to the earth in the form of crosses. The

nymphs disappeared forever from these areas, but their tears or crosses still remain to remind us of their grief.