

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Village Green

In Taos' "El Crepuseulo," the village newspaper, we found an article which we think might apply to a certain degree to Monterey and other Peninsula cities. It was written by Spud Johnson in his "Horse Fly," a one-page feature of the New Mexico paper.

Taos is also having its troubles with traffic, highways, and visitors and for several years the citizens there have been worrying over the solution of the problems of one-way streets and parking lots. The newspaper has endeavored to play part in the city's growth and ideals which have been well maintained throughout the years but, which are always projecting themselves into the daily life of the natives and the visitors, as well as the city fathers.

The Horse Fly first proposed a Village Green idea in 1949. In 1950, after repeatedly urging that the town take the plan under serious consideration, Taos laughed at the idea. Other cities, meantime, have achieved an approach to such an ideal by constructing, from scratch, park-like shopping centers some distance away from the congested hub of their existing city.

"Taos has the opportunity to be the first community in the United States to make such a practical conversion of an old town still functioning and alive, into a modern solution of the traffic problem - at the same time conserving its ancient quality and charm," writes the editor.

Here is the original editorial that appeared in El Crepuseulo June 9, 1949, on the subject of - The Village Green.

"Last week at a town meeting in the courthouse to discuss parking meters, Oscar Berninghaus is reported to have said that he 'would like to see the Plaza blocked off and hitching posts put back up to allow only horses in the Plaza.'

"This week, Mabel Dodge Luhan (formerly a Carmel resident) makes the revolutionary statement that 'it's no inconvenience to have no conveniences, and that the only way to enjoy Taos Valley is to drive all over with a two-seated buggy and team.'

"A few months ago, Ted Cabot wrote an editorial on the conversion of Kit Carson Cemetery into a State

Memorial Park, in which he said: "There is nothing in our town more pleasing to visitors than the green of our Plaza. To see green grass in our sometimes very dusty, ungreen village, I believe gives the traveler more of a kick than anything else. It's like coming suddenly into an oasis of trees and alfalfa after crossing miles of parched desert."

"Tactfully combining the Berninghaus plan, the Luhan dream and the Cabot plea, the suggestion of the Horse Fly editor is in the nature of a composite montage:

"Convert the entire square into an old-fashioned Village Green, grass from portal-to-portal. No pavements at all, therefore no spring-breaking holes and no expensive upkeep for the indigent Village Council to worry about.

"Ducks, geese, burros, goats, children, all at large. A canteen for hungry dogs to keep them from the garbage cans in various alleys. An aviary and a bandstand.

"A little field of Texas bluebonnets in front of the Court House to make our neighbors from the southeast feel at home. And the Fiesta dance-platform permanently installed for folk-dancing and community sings.

"All cars relegated to back alleys, side-streets, and established parking lots where the parking meters can gather all locusts and flood the village coffers with gold-or nickel . . .

"Not even a bicycle or a kiddie-car or roller skates allowed or the green: traffic there strictly limited to Shank's Mare . . .

"Don't laugh! The tourists would eat it up - and Taos would become really famous."

Since that date in 1949, Taos has accomplished two of the suggestions offered by the editorial. "The conversion of Kit Carson Cemetery into a State Memorial Park and, in the Plaza, a Fiesta dance-platform permanently installed for folk-dancing and community sings."