

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Opening of Hotel Del Monte

With the announcement of the elaborate plans for a Grand Military Ball to be held in the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, on Oct. 26, we were reminded of the first grand opening of Hotel Del Monte, now the Naval School, in the summer of 1880.

Memories of the "Roaring Eighties" and "Gay Nineties" will be revived there when the Monterey Peninsula Chapter Reserve Officers' Assn. acts as host to the 600 or more persons who are expected to attend this brilliant affair. Maj. Guy Stohr, (USA-ret.) is general chairman. Adm. Harold Pullen (USN-ret.) will act as grand marshal and Adm. Raymond A. Spruance has accepted the honor of being honorary chairman for this grand military ball.

Seventy-seven years ago, an article appeared in the "San Francisco News Letter and California Advertiser" telling of the original Hotel Del Monte as follows:

"The latest monument to Pacific Coast enterprise and prosperity, the Hotel Del Monte was opened at Monterey Saturday night. A lightning express train of six carriages, all crowded to their utmost capacity, left the Townsend street depot on Saturday afternoon carrying to the scene of the ceremony, the flower of San Francisco's aristocracy. A large number of travelers, including Gen. Butler and party, Eugene Sullivan and party, and Judge Delos Lake, were the guests of Sen. Sharon, and bound for Belmont.

"A few left the train at Menlo, but the majority were on their way to Monterey to participate in the ball and formal opening of the hotel. The ride was delightful, the weather being faultless and the scenery beautiful beyond description. It was evening when the brilliant party passed through the picturesque grounds and entered the stately portals of the great caravansary, illuminated to its principal public apartments and corridors by nearly a thousand gas jets, reflected again and again in as many glittering mirrors.

"After registering names and brushing up a bit after the journey, the multitude of visitors sat down to a banquet such as few men, but manager Schonewald could have arranged. We must be content to say that no improvement or convenience that modern luxury can require or suggest has been omitted.

"Without counting the space occupied by offices, reading, dining, and sitting rooms, etc., the hotel will easily accommodate between 300 and 400 guests, and many more in a pinch. All the rooms are lofty, airy, sunny, and richly furnished. The house faces to the east, the bay being on the west, and has balconies and verandas on all sides. It is of the Eastlake or modern gothic style.

"About 100 feet from the hotel and still in process of construction, is a large structure which will be headquarters for the gentlemen guests. It contains the billiard room, bar room (to be the finest in the state), ten pin alley, and other means of amusement and pastime.

"The stable measures 135 by 40 and has stalls and housing for 60 horses and 60 carriages. The bath house right on the bay, has 100 rooms, and is provided with shower baths of fresh water. Five hundred men are now employed laying out lawns and paths, and it is the intention of the company to have 50 miles of gravel laid drives completed before the end of the season. The house has its own gasworks of the very best description.

"After inspecting the interior and exterior of the hotel, the company separated to dance, stroll on the beach, or converse on the verandas, as fancy prompted them. In the spacious ballroom, some 80 couples participated in the first hop of the season. The majority of the guests of the establishment were present and there were many visitors from the residents of Monterey. The toilets of the ladies were exceedingly rich, elegant, and costly.

"Among the gentlemen on the floor were Charles Crocker, Charles Clayton, Maj. Hammond and Col. Jackson, who led off the first quadrille. Dancing was continued until midnight. Altogether the opening of Del Monte Hotel was a delightful event that will not be readily forgotten by those who were fortunate to share in it."

The Grand Military Ball will differ in many ways from the opening in 1880. but the great rooms will again be gay with feminine beauty in their very best finery. The gentlemen, probably not all in tails and white ties, will be nevertheless handsome. Fans will not be in evidence, but we wager there will be hundreds of beautiful corsages on as many shoulders of women guests. Also, there will probably be an added touch to this grand ball with many dress uniforms of the Army and Navy personnel, which we are so proud to have as both

permanent and temporary residents of the Peninsula,
with their colorful service ribbons and gold stripes. Let's
all attend and help support this event!