

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Letter Writer's Monterey

Recognition of the valuable work done in Monterey in restoration and preservation of the historic buildings as well as a lament for the loss of other local landmarks less fortunate in being left to the whims of unorganized public opinion, is contained in a letter received from William A. Roebuck of Hinsdale, Ill., in July, 1932. The letter was published in the Herald on July 21, 1932.

From a writer living at such a distance, Roebuck's opinion of 28 years ago, has more than ordinary interest for Peninsula readers today. The letter was addressed to the late Mrs. S. H. Hooke of Monterey.

"How far the disillusionments of our modern day have wiped away the picture of Old Monterey Peninsula, as described by the late Charles Warren Stoddard in his visit there in 1893, could best be known by his ghostly revisitation today, for I suppose he is long dead. I was 21 when he wrote about it and am now going on 71, 60 years of change.

"But whatever has happened along the fringe of coast line of that day whose description by him then will always remain the living picture, the citizens of Monterey should feel justly proud in having preserved down to our time much of what he saw and knew of the 'Old Pacific Capital.'"

Roebuck must have been impressed with the *House of Four Winds' for he wrote: "One of the old buildings The House of Four Winds, was the first hall of records. Twenty-two others have been saved. It is a good work for one town. Where there was like opportunity elsewhere in the state it is too bad there was not more of the Monterey spirit and foresight. Many destroyed landmarks throughout Southern California would today have been more useful to the state and the country than the improvements that have taken their place. The inevitable sequel to their destruction has been the belated appreciation shown in the effort to capitalize on their ghosts. All such advertising betrays a confession of neglected opportunity. No one in particular is responsible, but it does not help matters to advertise it. The country knows what is there, what is gone and how it all came about. It is pretty bad."

This quote from the letter is interesting: "California is a land of sunshine and scenery. It had a third charm,

Ruins and romance - but the ruins have pretty much gone to neglect or vanished and (the romance has been swept away with them. This was not good business, if you count it by ethics and trusteeship."

The gentleman from Illinois continues his letter: "There are more history minded people in the country than real estate dealers. More artists, writers, playwrights, poets, historians, and travelers who would come to California for soul refreshment and mental relaxation than those who would go to attend social functions that might be had 50 miles from home. This should have been figured out in California 80 years ago. Now the state and country are both losers.

Moral of this story is to save old letters even if they clutter up the attic, for some day they may be very valuable. At least don't destroy old ones until you look them over thoroughly or have someone do the job for you. For example, a Palo Alto dealer in old documents, has just sold to the Friends of the Bancroft Library at the University of California, a letter signed by Sir Francis Drake for \$2,000.