

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 15, 1958

### **Monterey Vs. Santa Barbara**

In Friday's Diary we repeated a letter from William A. Roebuck of Hinsdale, Ill., in which he discusses California and in particular Monterey. Today we will continue with items from that letter written in July 1932. Our correspondent must have had the pleasure of a recent visit at that time for he pictures our city as it looked 28 years ago.

After both complimenting and scolding Monterey for saving or not saving more of its historic heritage, our correspondent writes of Santa Barbara's mistakes.

"Your neighboring pueblo, when it became Americanized 80 years ago surveyed two of its principal streets across the middle of the Presidio. Nothing was done to save it, nor the ground it stood on, nor any part of it. Nothing has been done since. The place is now privately owned and historically nil.

"It was the first landmark in the town, first community center and contained the first church, beyond whose wall was the first graveyard, graves of the town's first citizens, many of whose descendants today have come down from the soldiers and families who lived within the fort. But it all went. There is not a thing there now but a boulder with a tablet at the eastern limits, put there by the DAR, four markers at the boundaries erected by the Native Sons and one original soldier's house stark and bare from earth floor to smoked room.

"On the other hand, the Mission in this pueblo was saved, destroyed and rebuilt two or three times; and so it stands today, world renowned, you might say, among America's revered antiquities, welcoming its dally groups of visitors from many lands; its venerable towers, symbols of Serra's faith, familiar wherever California travel literature goes, and church and city have become synonymous. This shows the good of keeping historic landmarks and what is good in one place would have been good in another, but it was not seen at the time."

It is too bad that Roebuck could not revisit the Monterey Peninsula today. We are sure if he could, he would rewrite this column:

"The Mission chain is about gone, with most of the rest, and the bones of the founder of California's first Christian civilization lie near your place, little noted, in a

meadow beneath the fallen walls, so to speak, and we are all out that much. Not like the eastern states, which preserved so many of their historic memorials, Christian, social, patriotic and otherwise.

"They are a people's heritage," Roebuck continues, "of which we are proud and glad. What the Spanish, and Mexicans and Franciscans left to state and to the United States, would have been much the same way had they been kept."

The writer then goes on to compliment Monterey "Monterey knows this is so because she has preserved so many and can point them out to her thousands of visitors, instead of harping on 'tradition,' which has been rapidly and ruthlessly manufactured in other parts of the state by the mere process of tearing down what they had. Many a fine old adobe of historical associations, with its mellow walls, drowsy flowers. reminiscent air of other days has been grubbed out to join its fellows in the Valhalla of forgotten things to make way for a supposed improvement. And who would go to California to see an Improvement?"

"The many natural indentures along California's coast where mountain and valley, shore and sea, and distant islands hover low on the horizon like bluish dream mounds, seemed to climax their charms, just for the simple Indian a century and a half ago. They retain their charms for the white man just the same, little changed. What has happened in between from that day to this by our puny efforts to what we call of human interest. Much of the best part of that has been destroyed forever, which shows how frail and unthinking humans are, after all. Let us keep what little there is left."