

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 14, 1958

Mission Soledad

The ground was blessed and the first spadeful of dirt was turned April 25, 1954, on the site of Mission Nuestra Senora de Soledad, when the Native Daughters of the Golden West began restoration of the historical old mission near the town of Soledad in Southern Monterey County. Mission Soledad was the 13th in the chain of missions from Sonoma to San Diego. And was the last to be restored in part.

Mission Soledad, founded in October 1791, had a thoroughly miserable existence it seems for it never gained an Indian population of over 700. Its property, aside from the church proper, appraised at \$36,000 in 1925, sold in 1846 for \$800.

In 1832, Father Vicente Sarria who had retired to Soledad a virtual prisoner after refusing to swear allegiance to the Mexican government, reported that a provisional church building had been erected to replace the first one, which had collapsed because of floods. It is this most recent structure that the Native Daughters of the Golden West have restored.

A recent issue of the California Herald, official publication of the Native Daughters, contains an article concerning a museum for Mission Soledad by Margaret Jacobsen. The Mission Soledad Restoration Committee of the Native Daughters realize that the establishment of a museum is an important factor in the restoration program. Many of the people who can help most, not only in material ways but also by their knowledge of how the Mission's treasures and mementos came to be scattered about the state, are descendants of families whose names are synonymous with California's early history.

In many cases, the stories of these articles after they were removed from the decaying Mission site are of more interest than the routine function, they performed at the Mission itself. For this information the committee will have to reach into the hearts and homes of persons who wish to share these treasures with a new generation who have never heard all the tales of the Mission's heyday or seen any of the articles necessary to mission life which were made there, writes Mrs. Jacobsen.

The museum at Soledad Mission on the River road near the town of Soledad, will help to paint the picture for those without knowledge or vision to see in the dry adobe walls, a way of life that included beautiful hand-wrought works of art as well as crude, homemade articles used in everyday living.

In accordance with the program of restoration authorized by His Excellency Aloysius J. Willinger, Bishop of the Monterey-Fresno Diocese, and as set forth by the Native Daughters, all historical, natural history objects, or other personal property that evidence indicates were part of the original furnishings, appurtenances, or site of Mission Soledad, or that apply to the particular historical period, for the years to and including 1885, in accordance with approved administrative policy regarding same, will be accepted by the Native Daughters of the Golden West for placement in suitable museum quarters at the Mission Soledad site.

Already back in their places in the Chapel are the original Stations of the Cross. The original bell which had hung these many years in the belfry of the little parish church, in Soledad, has been returned to the Mission. Oil paintings of the Spanish era, an enameled tumbler used as a blessing font, solid silver candlestick holders, a reliquary and chalice, all cast in Mexico, are recent gifts to Mission Nuestra Senora de la Soledad.

Anyone, having any articles pertaining to the early Mission days is asked to get in touch with Mrs. Thomas Hambey Sr., P. O. Box 1418. Soledad. Calif.