

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Doll Exhibit

As a resident of Monterey or as a possible tourist visiting this city, I would certainly make the Historical Route Tour a must during my stay. By the Route we mean the orange line in the center of the streets which leads to most of the most important historical buildings in Monterey. The yellow and black markers appearing in front of the buildings tell the story in brief of the history of the adobe being seen, many of which may be visited between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5p.m.

The State of California owns and directs the supervision of the buildings under the Division of Beaches and Parks with Newton Drury as the chief and Jess Chaffee as the division superintendent. These historical monuments include the Custom House, Stevenson House, House of Gold, the Pacific Building and California's First Theater.

The Larkin House will soon be added to the list of monuments open to the public, this historic home having recently been presented to the State of California by Mrs. Alice Larkin Toulmin. She is the granddaughter of Thomas Oliver Larkin, the builder of the house and the first and only American consul to Monterey under Mexican rule.

Today we are interested in the special exhibit of dolls and doll clothes which Mrs. Alice Issler, curator of the Stevenson House has placed on display in the "sewing room" and in the "children's room" of the second floor of the old adobe on Houston street. A few days ago, we told of the doll costumes made by the family dressmaker, who appeared once or twice a year at every home. We were delighted to view them and so fascinated by the display that we wish all our readers would make a special pilgrimage to the Stevenson House to see the exhibits.

When Mrs. Issler conceived the idea of making a special exhibit of dolls and their miniature clothes, there were not enough dolls and no forms for displaying the doll clothes. Being creative, she with the assistance of the custodian, Mrs. Gladys Hayes, made a form. Two bottles, one on a skirt, the other fitted into it for the body part were covered with plenty of cotton and shaped to appear as a presumably well corseted doll, and the whole covered with scraps of sheeting. After

the form was "dressed" nobody could tell how it had been made.

The larger doll, who owned the rest of the clothing in the exhibit had a real, honest-to-goodness corset. This doll is the one on the little brass bed in the children's room.

The doll in the little rocking chair beside the bed and her many pieces of dressmaker-made clothing dates from about 1880. Her clothes are the ones displayed in the "sewing room."

Seated on the big bed in the Children's Room is a doll with a wax face. She has feet shaped like a boot and painted black. Garments are copies of the original ones the doll had on, and are of the period of the 1870s - straw bonnet, blueprint dress, white petticoat and white pantaloons, trimmed with lace. She was brought to Monterey over 80 years ago for the lady who gave this doll, her buggy and many other gifts of historic interest.

This gracious and generous lady is Mrs. Millie Birks, who once resided in the Custom House. She remembers Robert Louis Stevenson, who lived for a time in Monterey in 1870. She says that Stevenson always noticed the children, who called him Splinters because of his cadaverous appearance.

There is a charming wax doll in a glass case in the hall outside the Children's Room, a gift from Mrs. Lawrence Lyon of Pacific Grove, which came from Paris, and was brought to California in the 1850s. Mrs. Jean McKinney of Monterey was the donor of the doll and the doll clothes in the special exhibit. The clothes number about 70 and were made about 75 years ago.