

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 12, 1958

Yours sincerely,  
Lou Henry Hoover

### **Echoing Mrs. Hoover**

In 1933 a short time after the organization of the Monterey History and Art Assn., Mrs. Herbert Hoover (Lou Henry Hoover) wrote a letter to Carmel Martin expressing her interest in Old Monterey, her former home. It seems amusing that we should have been talking and thinking about the very things 25 years ago that are being discussed today.

The letter began: "I do hope that in the reconstruction of the old buildings as much of it as possible can be done as restoration. Both historically and artistically the houses of Old Monterey as they were built, and even as you and I first knew them, were so much finer than most of the so-called reproductions of today. For instance, are there any pictures or descriptions of the Old Cuartel that will make it possible to build a replica of it - or at least with very slight practical alterations?"

"And have you pictures or descriptions of the old gardens, that the planting may be on the old times and not modern ones? I was so pleased in driving past Colton Hall, to realize from the gardening there that someone was taking an interest in its welfare. But I could not stop long enough to ascertain whether the gardens were such as might be planned 150 years ago, or whether it was just modern "beautification." There was a charm about the gardens of Miss Bonifacio, of the Fields, of the Escolles, of the Abregos, of the Malarins, and others whom we used to know, that would be so singularly appropriate, as distinguished from the perhaps equal charm of modern gardens.

"There must have been as distinct a difference between the planting about public buildings of that day and today, as there is between those surrounding private residences. It would seem to me, that if possible we should catch the exact character of the old planting as well as of the old buildings themselves, and not be satisfied with a certain kind of sentimental adaptation that is so much in evidence right now. But I confess, at the moment I do not happen to remember any early pictures that show the arrangement of the grounds around the public buildings of Monterey or any kind of the old Spanish settlements.

"Hoping that someday, I may be able to be of some assistance in the program, and with much interest, I am

Former president Herbert Hoover and Lou Henry were married in Monterey by the late Father Mestres. Mrs. Hoover had been a schoolteacher here as a young woman and her family lived for many years at the corner of Jackson and Pacific streets. Later on, Mr. Henry, who was a banker, built a home at 600 Martin St.

A committee of prominent citizens of the Peninsula met in July of 1933, under the sponsorship of the Monterey History and Art Assn. to talk over some plans for future preservation of Old Monterey. The committee was composed of S. F. B. Morse, Allen Griffin, Col. Roger S. Fitch and Carmel Martin.

The result of that meeting is the following report: "In historic interest, Monterey is to California and the entire Pacific Coast, what Plymouth, Jamestown and Saint Augustine, together, are to the Atlantic Seaboard and the east. Monterey's historical heritage is not only of municipal and state, but also of national importance. Monterey was the point where Vizcaino landed in 1602 and claimed California for Spain. It was the Capital of Spanish and Mexican regimes, and also the first Capital of the State of California. It was here our State Constitution was drawn. She is the mother of history in the West and is the first seat of established government in all that tremendous area west of the Rocky Mountains.

"Fortunately, most of her old buildings still stand and much of her romantic background has been preserved. Some irreplaceable buildings are gone, but enough are left to recall the past and to enrich the present and the future.

"Today the historic buildings that remain in Monterey are found principally in three general groups or areas. It is hoped someday to have these areas connected by appropriate plantings of trees in accordance with the Old Monterey Preservation Plan.

"The smallest of the three groups of buildings contains the Old Custom House, over which the flags of Spain and Mexico successively flew and where in 1846, Commander Sloat raised the Stars and Stripes. This group also contains the First Theater, First Brick House, Old Whaling Station and the landing place of Portola and Father Serra.

“The second area is composed of historic Colton Hall, the Larkin House, Gen. Sherman's headquarters, the Stokes Adobe, Casa de la Torre and Casa Alvarado.

“The largest group of all, is that in the neighborhood of the original Plaza of Old Monterey and the site of the Old Cuartel, the first seat of government on the Pacific Coast; the Mission church, Casa Abrego, Casa Pacheco, Casa Amesti, First French Consulate, Stevenson House and Casa Munras.”

The committee recommended that all these old adobe buildings and sites be preserved and restored and that the plaza be returned to the people as a plaza, an appropriate entrance to Alvarado street on the south.