

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 2, 1958

The History and Art Association

Since 1931 - the year of the founding of the Monterey History and Art Assn. - the anniversary of the birth of Monterey has been celebrated in Memory Garden with a "Merienda" on June 3. This year the city's birthday fell on election day, so the celebration was postponed until the following day, June 4.

Through the courtesy first of the Misses Lee, Margaret and Vida Jacks, who then owned the Old Pacific Building; then the City of Monterey, which assumed the care of Memory Garden, and finally the State Division of Beaches and Parks in which care the building and garden have been placed through the generous gift of Miss Margaret Jacks to the State of California; the History and Art Association has sponsored a "Merienda" in the delightful setting.

This year's Merienda will feature a typical Spanish luncheon, and as always the Merienda cake, given each year by Miss Jacks and carried around the garden on a bier four members of the association gathered together by Emmett G. McMenam. Roses from the garden of Mrs. Henry Ragsdale in Oak Grove.

The Monterey History and Art Association was formed Jan. 19, 1931, with 40 charter members gathering in the Custom House. Within the first year, the membership grew to 128. The membership now is about 500. Owing to the size of Memory Garden only 400 places can be provided at the set tables, so in order to avoid disappointment, members are asked to reserve seats and pick up their reservations, as soon as possible at California's First Theater.

Purposes of the History and Art Association are three-fold:

1—To promote interest in the history of Monterey County, to promote its historical sites, landmarks and buildings, to assist in the identification of points of historical interest, and when deemed advisable - to erect suitable markers and monuments.

2—To cultivate and promote a widespread interest in the development of art and to facilitate the artistic growth of the community in architecture, painting and other forms of art.

3—To collect, preserve and own paintings, sketches, drawings, records, books, manuscripts, charts and other material pertaining to the history and art of Monterey and California, and to have and to hold such property, both real and personal, as may be necessary to carry out the projects of the association.

The above is from the constitution and by-laws of the association as drawn up in 1931. The late Col. Roger Fitch, in 1931 the commanding officer at the Presidio of Monterey, was elected president of the association. He proceeded enthusiastically to plan the work of the group and to originate the Path of History which still marks the streets leading to the historic old adobes in Monterey. Following the Merienda on June 4, the members of the association and any guests who wish to be present, will gather in Friendly Plaza near Colton Hall to dedicate a pool and fountain as a memorial of Colonel Fitch.

J. F. van Loben Sels is the current president. Allen Knight is vice president, and the board of directors comprises 30 members. This board meets the first Monday of each month in the Old Pacific building to discuss projects and matters of business pertaining to the aims and purposes of the Association.

The association has always worked in harmony with the State Division of Beaches and Parks and with the City of Monterey. Eighty per cent of the exhibits in the Old Custom House - gifts, in the main, from old local families, are association property, and a great deal of the interesting exhibits in the Stevenson House have been provided by the gifts from the association through friends and members.