

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Spanish Castle of Monterey

"I finally achieved one my hopes when I came to Europe. I hoped I would be able to visit the original castle of the Counts of Monterrey in Galicia and then later palace here in Salamanca," writes Mary L. Greene, former curator of the Old Custom House in Monterey, California.

"When I crossed into Spain at San Sebastian I looked over my Michelin map and the distance to Galicia, the western part, was so great, and I, a novice in driving in Spain, talked myself out of the notion as foolish extravagance. I was through with history and I would be wiser to get to the south of Spain and forget Monterrey. So I drove straight through to Madrid, stayed there about ten days experiencing lots of rain, not too comfortable hotel and I was already to go south, but again I hankered to go to Monterrey as it is now or never. So finally I started toward Galicia and Monterrey.

"I had no more than left town when it started to pour—and pour it did all day. I crossed the Guadarrama mountains, a two land highway, no white lines and lots of trucks to pass. The country was very sparsely settled with towns far apart and nightmares to drive through when I did come to one. Usually in small towns the pavement peters out the road narrows and you squeeze between buildings hoping no one is coming around the corner. The country of rolling hills were all brown as though the grain or wheat had just been harvested, many houses, mostly of adobe of "ammed earth, not bricks and everything brown.

Still seeking Monterrey from which Monterey in California got its name, Mrs. Green continues: "In the afternoon, rain still pouring, miles from any habitation, I discovered I had a flat tire—my new car! On the Volkswagen I did not even know how to use a jack. So I sat and waited. Sure enough a young man came along, changed the tire and I was on my way. That night I stayed in Alberque, a government operated Tourist Wayside Inn and was it like Heaven!"

Mrs. Greene finally arrived in Verin near the Portuguese border and there found her castle. Verin is situated in the center of a beautiful wide valley on the edge of a crystal clear swift flowing river. On the other side of the river, she wrote, a mountain rises straight up. It is

nearly a mile to the top and on the summit is perched the towers and walls of the ancient castle fortress Monterrey. "It dates, as I remember, from the 11th century and during the many wars that came later, it was used at times to house and protect the people from surrounding villages. It was one of the important strongholds in Galicia."

"I had lunch there, then started out to find the road up to the summit. No road for a car, so I made it to stone boulders of granite, no cobbles here, and walls on each side. I rested a couple of times but finally made it to the top.

"Much of the castle is in ruins but two tall towers still stand. There are many beautiful stone carved arches left and the chapel is in good condition and is furnished just as it was. We saw the huge stone ovens where bread was baked for the multitude. The day was a gorgeous one and what an-experience to be in such a place on such a day.

"If Galicia had a little warmer weather I would stay here longer. It is so beautiful, eye filling scenery everywhere, all work done by oxen and the carretas still use the old wooden wheels. Festoons of golden corn hang from the balconies of the houses drying in the sun. "I am certainly glad I went to Monterrey!"