

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 20, 1959

A Busy First Year

At this date when the Monterey History and Art Assn. is deeply interested in the restoration of the Casa Serrano which is to be the headquarters for the membership from this date on, we decided that it might be appropriate to print the contents of the first annual report given at the first annual meeting by the first president, Col. Roger S. Fitch, on Jan. 18, 1932.

The report begins: "This association was formed Jan. 19, 1931 at a gathering of about 40 interested individuals residing on the Monterey Peninsula. Since that time, the membership has grown to the gratifying total of 128.

"At an early meeting of the board of directors three basic committees functioned admirably throughout the year. Great credit is due them for their earnest and successful work. These committees are the committee on art with E. Charleton Fortune as chairman; the committee on architecture with W. O. Raiguel as chairman, and the committee on history with Mrs. Laura Bride Powers as chairman. In addition, a committee on membership was formed with J. R. Sneyd-Kynnersley as chairman, later on a committee on missions was formed, headed by Carmel Martin Sr. and a committee on entertainment was appointed to be headed by Myron Oliver."

Aside from the meeting that marked the formation of the association a year before, for which Laura Bride Powers had arranged an interesting exhibit of photographs, maps and other objects of historic interest, there had been during the year several events of social and historical interest, or both, either sponsored by or assisted by the association and its members.

The early part of that year there had been an "Old Monterey Loan Exhibit" at the Old Custom House. It consisted of a preview of historic objects connected with Monterey and its pioneer families. Music and refreshments were provided. For two weeks many persons visited the Custom House and viewed the exhibit.

The Monterey Birthday celebration was held in Memory Garden on June 3, but the location was then called "Patio of the Pacific Building," and if our memory serves

us right it was Mrs. Powers who gave it the delightful and appropriate name The garden bears today.

it is recorded in this report of 27 years ago that the association suggested that city authorities secure permission for the U.S.S. Nevada to remain here to participate in celebrating the 88th anniversary of the raising of the American Flag at the Old Custom House by Commodore John Drake Sloat on July 7, 1846. In addition to the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps participating, many distinguished people of the Peninsula were present, including a number of descendants of noted Spanish, Mexican and American actors in the epochal event of California history.

Throughout that year a close liaison had been maintained with the State Division of Beaches and Parks through its chief of that time, Col. Charles B. Wing. A special committee, consisting of Raiguel, Oliver and Mrs. Powers, was appointed by the Board of Directors to study the needs of the Old Custom House, and make recommendations thereon. As a result of their work and Col. Wing's favorable action to their recommendations, the Old Custom House was restored, needed repairs made, and proper facilities provided for the safe keeping of the historic relics there on exhibition.

Similarly, a committee, consisting of Raiguel, Oliver and Col. Fitch, made recommendations to Col. Wing as to repairs and improvements urgently needed in the First Theater building and grounds. As a result, proper outside drainage was provided so as to preserve the old adobe walls, a gas heating system was installed, and an old-style brick sidewalk was laid. The premises were cleaned and made more presentable under the supervision of the late Mrs. Jane Todd, who gave freely of her time and thought to this needed work. The city authorities also cooperated and hauled away the debris.

A number of tapestries, paintings and other objects of art and historical interest were loaned, or in some cases donated to the association by various prominent and public-spirited residents of the Peninsula.

During the year a list showing some 20 unmarked spots in Monterey of such historic interest as to merit having permanent markers erected over them was practically completed by the committee on history, together with recommendations as to the exact location and design of markers, and proposed wording of each inscription. Soon after this was presented to the directors for approval. Then the funds made available by the

Chamber of Commerce made it possible to mark these points by simple iron markers, as had already been done at the Portola-Serra landing place.