

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 11, 1959

### **A Sight To Behold**

The cars, of the Pacific Grove-Monterey streetcar system in 1890 must have been a sight to behold for they were trimmed in maroon and gold. During the spring of 1904, eight new double truck cars arrived from the St. Louis Car Co. Four were open summer cars and four were combination - half open, half closed (California Type). A single truck car was built at the Monterey barns and numbered 13.

All cars were fitted with the Ohmer register to record the number of passengers carried, number of 5 and 10 cent fares, school tickets, transfers, etc., collected by the conductor, also the trip and the mileage made by the car daily. The fare between Del Monte and the Grove was set at 20 cents and five cents on the Ord Barracks line (Presidio). To ride to Monterey was only 10 cents. A 15-minute service was provided on both lines and in June 1904, the fare between Del Monte and the Grove was reduced to 10 cents. Ticket books could be purchased which entitled one to ride half fare, thus giving regular patrons the benefit of a five-cent fare over the entire road.

Earl C. Hanson, the editor of the Western Railroader, writes in his report of the history of the Monterey-Pacific Grove Railroad: "Forty-five-pound steel rails were used on the entire line. Shortly after completion the company was taken over by the Bylesby Syndicate Co. of Chicago, the same company that had controlled the United Railroads in San Francisco. At that time, an extension was built from Lighthouse avenue and 17th street along Lighthouse and 19th street to the Pacific Grove depot of the Southern Pacific."

In May 1905, a group of notables made a special trip over the lines and one out-of-town guest was quoted as saying. "It is without a doubt one of the grandest scenic routes on the Pacific coast."

Hanson wrote another revealing paragraph of the most beautiful and most costly of all the cars on this old-time railroad: "During the fall of 1905, a parlor car was ordered from the St. Louis Car Company and was received late that same year. The car was a superb product of the car builders' art. It was 36 feet in length, fitted with every possible convenience and luxury. The windows were extra-large, the interior was of rare

imported mahogany, fixtures and draperies were of fancy silk and plush. At each end was an open observation section, enclosed with grill work of solid bronze three feet in height. The car was trimmed, in the company colors and was named 'Del Monte.'

"At first the car was used only for special inspection trips over the road, but in later years it served as the famous sight-seeing car operating between Del Monte and the Grove with a specially installed gramophone that played 'In Old Monterey,' as its passengers enjoyed the scenic ride over the then-called 'Bay Shore Line.'"

With the outbreak of World War I, the Presidio was immediately filled with soldiers and almost overnight the passenger revenue hitman all-time high on the M&PG, and though only one car was regularly used, as many as five cars were seen challenging the steep grade up Franklin street hill, each in turn loaded to capacity with many soldiers of the 11th Cavalry.

At the end of the war, the dirt road had been paved at the point where it entered the east gate of the presidio, as were all the streets in Monterey at this time. It was named High street. The "Del Monte" continued its familiar tours until 1920, when it was taken out of service, and housed at the Monterey car barn until sold to a private owner in Los Gatos, where it remained as a private home until destroyed by fire in 1945.

In 1923, service was discontinued. All equipment was scrapped at the Del Monte car barns and then the barns were torn down. The Monterey car barn was torn down also, but the powerhouse was retained as a warehouse for the Monterey County Gas & Electric Co., and is still used by the PG&E.