

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Stevenson House**

William Hogan who writes "A Bookman's Notebook" for a San Francisco newspaper, evidently was a recent Monterey Peninsula visitor for he not only observed the happenings on Cannery Row but visited the Stevenson House on Houston street and wrote about it in his notebook.

Hogan noted these facts: "The Scottish-born poet and story-teller Robert Louis Stevenson spent only a fraction of his tuberculosis plagued 44 years in Monterey. He arrived there in 1879, having followed Fanny Osborne, who after her divorce, became his wife. Yet Monterey houses one of the most imaginative memorials to a writer that we have in this country. I looked in again the other day at this wonderful old house of the Spanish period on Houston street where Stevenson took lodgings in two upstairs rooms. He was in his usual bad health and enjoyed the five windows that allowed him plenty of air. The rooms were barely furnished, but, Katherine D. Osborne wrote in 'Robert Louis Stevenson in California,' 'it seems that there was even more furniture than Stevenson wanted; for he did not occupy the bed, but slept on the floor in camp blankets.'"

Hogan goes on to relate; "Filled with contemporary furnishings and a valuable collection of Stevensoniana, the Monterey house is a positive and touching shrine, even though Stevenson did little of his writings there. Monterey treats its history well, and this is the case in point"

During a visit to the Stevenson House this week we discovered a new pamphlet containing information of this historic monument just published by the Division of Beaches and Parks. It is presented free to the visitors who arrive daily at the Stevenson House.

The publication is entitled "Some Highlights in Stevenson's Life" with a cover drawing of Stevenson and a back page drawing of the house, a short history of the old two story adobe building at 530 Houston St., Monterey, and a map of the Path of History.

The historic data on the life of Robert Louis Stevenson begins with his birth in Edinburgh, Scotland, Nov. 13, 1850, " and ends with his death in Samoa in 1894.

Reference to Monterey is made in these quotations: "1879, August 31, to late December 1879, Stevenson

lived in Monterey, most of the time in this house which bears his name. Mrs. Osborne was vacationing with her son, daughter, and sister in 'The Old Pacific Capital' at the Bonifacio adobe. He wrote 'The Pavilion of the Links' and 'Arizona Breckenridge,' which he never quite finished. Articles were sold to the Monterey Californian for \$2 each. At Christmas he moved to San Francisco."

"Did you read about 'Freedomland. U.S.A.' - the 205-acre outdoor family entertainment center which opened this past summer in New York City to the tune of \$65 million?" the Grand Parlor of the Native Daughters of the Golden West wish to know.

"You can visit little old New York of 1750; New England during Revolutionary days; Chicago at the Great Fire time; Lewis and Clark expedition; Silver Strike of 1859 in Colorado; fur trapping and the Northwest Passage, etc., but guess what? To represent California are the Barbary Coast of San Francisco and the Keystone Kops of Hollywood 20's. Aren't we rich in history? Just like 'em to have the Kops run to and out of the Gold Nugget Bar chased by a cable car . . . and they say the darned thing was built to last 50 years!"