

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 27, 1959

Mary Greene In Holland

Mrs. Mary Greene, former curator of the Old Custom House in Monterey, is at present seeing Holland in the spring, after spending several months touring and studying in Mexico. Her appreciation of the beauty of Holland in tulip time is the subject of our Diary today. We will let Mrs. Greene be the editor today.

"I have been in Holland just 14 days but what an exciting experience - it would take a book to describe it all. I was in Rotterdam for a week and then came here to Amsterdam. I had read that much of the city (Rotterdam), badly bombed in the war, was now new and so I did not expect to spend but one night there, but I found a comfortable, inexpensive hotel and stayed on.

"The shops were so modern, fresh flower arrangements in almost every window. Podestas in San Francisco never had more beautiful orchids - the new shopping center, Lindabaan, - wide stone-paved streets only for pedestrians - large planted beds down the center - tulips, daffodils, pansies and other spring flowers - side walk cafes where folks seem continually to be sitting drinking most anything.

"I took one trip to Utrecht, then on to Amsterdam. Had one night in the luxurious Carlton Hotel where my room adjoined a marble bathroom.

"I went the next day to the National Tourist Bureau where a very nice woman helped me, I told her I wanted an inexpensive place to stay. She mentioned several. Then, her aunt being on the Board of the Netherlands Woman's Club, she suggested I might be able to get a room there, as, when a room is available, they take tourists. I was lucky. I got the best room in the house.

"The club is in two houses built more than 300 years ago, four stories and openings have been made inside between the two. My room is about 18 to 20 feet square with three tall windows overlooking the wide canal. The room belongs to a woman lawyer who has been ill in a hospital for some time. I expect to stay here for a month.

"It is beautifully furnished, lovely old oriental rugs, and several large, exquisite pieces of antique furniture. There is a large dining room in the club where food is

very good and typically Dutch. For breakfast we have a large plate of different kinds of bread, a jar of butter, always with a butter rose formed with a knife, on top, cheese, once in a while a boiled egg, jam and the best coffee.

"Dinner is beautifully served. We sit at small tables. There is a library which they allow me to use - books, magazines, and papers - some from the U. S. and some English, in addition to Dutch, German and French.

"When I came on the train from Rotterdam, between Leiden and Haarlem, we passed through the bulb fields all in glorious color, miles and miles of blue, red, gold, pink, with daffodils, narcissi and hyacinths and budding tulips.

"Yesterday was a warm, golden spring day, so I decided to take the trip to the National Spring Garden and Flower Show at Kennenhof park, just the other side of Haarlem. I went by train and bus and truly it was the experience of a lifetime.

"Each grower of bulbs has his own section of the park. The tulips in every color, most vivid crimson to purest white, short stems and long stems, some new varieties with four double blooms on one stalk! Then the hyacinths, all colors. (Can you imagine the perfume of acres of hyacinths). Then the daffodils and grape hyacinths (muscovari).

"There were lakes and statues, swans, geese and ducks, fountains, tall budding trees and the tulip trees (magnolia) in full bloom. One building had beautiful flower arrangements and long huge greenhouses, full of blooming tulips. A photographer's paradise! No hawkers, no claptrap, just beauty on all sides. My advice to travelers is to come to Holland in April!

"Sunday afternoon I attended the opera 'Die Fledermaus.' It was a wonderful experience, too - fine orchestra, beautiful setting and the voices were very fine and well blended. I also took the boat trip through the canals and harbor. Will be busy sightseeing for days to come. I am within walking distance of most everything here.

"I will be in Amsterdam until about May 15. After this visit I expect to go through Germany to Vienna, then Italy."

Mrs. Greene writes further: "I went through the Keukenhof Manor House - they call it Casteel. It is very large brick country home, more than 300 years old and

was occupied by the family up to 1944. The furniture is marvelous and as well displayed as at Williamsburg. There were fresh flower arrangements in every room, carpets (all old Dutch hand-tufted) they let you walk upon. In the magnificent dining room the table was covered with a heavy damask cloth and set for six, fresh fruit in epergne, including hot-house grapes, crystal, silver (turned face down so you could see the family crest), even a fresh roll inside, folded napkin. A guide showed us through and explained objects in Dutch and-very halting English. It was so well done!"