

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 15, 1959

### **Mary Greene's Amsterdam**

Mrs. Mary L. Greene is our guest writer again today. Not for the reason that she has hundreds of friends on the Monterey Peninsula but because in our opinion her description of Holland and Amsterdam in particular, is so realistic and entertaining. Her letter is dated April 19 and written in Amsterdam.

"I have been taking long walks each day, there is so much to see, Yesterday I spent most of the day at the National Art Museum and Gallery where the paintings are wonderfully displayed - one whole gallery of Rembrandt's best, where his famous 'Night Watch' is featured. There were paintings by Franz Hals and Vermeer - my favorite - also paintings from the 1400s up to the present time. The Dutch floral paintings are truly wonderful when you see those painted by the masters.

"In the portraits details of textures are so wonderfully done, the jewelry really sparkles. It was such a treat to be able to enjoy this style of painting after so much 'modern abstract' we are exposed to in the United States.

"Friday, I took an all-day trip via American Express bus to the cheese market at Allsmaar, an every-Friday event at the old brick high-towered weight market. The men who carry, the cheeses on wooden platforms - two men to a load - wear straw hats, high crowned and broad brimmed, with ribbons hanging down the back. The hats are painted blue, yellow, or red, depending on the guild the man belongs to. Their suits are white.

"The tower above the weigh house contains an interesting house. When the clock struck 11 while we were there the huge wooden figure above the clock raised his long trumpet to his lips and continued to raise and lower it while music played. Below him a door opened, and horses passed round and round going both directions.

"Then for about half an hour the beautiful clarions played. Our guide told us that on Friday the clarions are played manually and other days mechanically. We had lunch at Alkaar, then on to the fishing village on the former Zuider Zee (it is being enclosed with dikes, then will be drained and made into farm lands).

"In Volendam most of the people continue to wear their native costumes, wooden shoes, and the men wear the long full trousers. From Volendam we took a motor launch about three miles across to the Islands of Marken, where the residents continue to live in the old-fashioned wooden houses. We went into one. The walls were covered with blue plates which the women told us were all taken down once a week and washed . . . Stacks of round, painted boxes they said were used to hold clothing. At one end of the room were two boxed-in beds, one for the father and mother, another at the wall at the foot was a wooden manger-like affair for the baby.

"Off this room was the kitchen with a ladder to the attic where the 'boys' sleep. They have a different costume for this village. The men wear knee-length full trousers. The women and girls wear small caps, five inside one another. Their hair is banged in front and looks as though it had been cut with an axe, then stiffened with water and formed straight out from the forehead. The hair also cut short in the back, but over each ear, at the side, a long curl.

"Coming back, we passed through Edam, stopped at a farmhouse where they make the famous cheese. The farmhouses are old, one had a marker 1641. They are square and brick with a high pyramid roof of tile or thatch. The loft is to store hay and across the front are family rooms, back of this the cows, where the animals are kept inside five months out of the year in the winter. Then one room is for cheese making.

"This is all; my paper and air mail costs are high here. So this is the closing 'Having a wonderful time'."