

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Second Paradise

Recently off the press of the Academy Library Guild at Fresno is Lucy Neely McLane's second edition of "A Piney Paradise." This book is a documentary history of Pacific Grove and of the Monterey Peninsula tradition. Throughout the 387 pages there are many fascinating stories of the early days on the Peninsula and a profusion of old and new photographs of local scenery, buildings and places which are bound to bring back memories to many who have spent delightful summers in the "Grove" or may have been present at camp meetings or Chautauqua gatherings there in years gone by.

Founded in 1875 as a Methodist Seaside Retreat, the much-advertised "heavenly spot," "God's Kingdom-by-the-Sea," Pacific Grove soon attracted hordes of visitors who had been invited "to breath the pure aroma of the pines, to inhale the ozone from the broad Pacific with no one to trouble them."

In 1886 the Del Monte Wave described Pacific Grove thusly: "Out of historic Monterey on the road that skirts the rocky cliffs and sandy beaches stretching along the bay lies Pacific Grove.

"Around you is a forest of pine. There are graveled roads that lead you on its thoroughfares: there are woodland trails that track its plazas.

"The coast is broken and picturesque; sandy beaches lie scattered below as you wander along the cliffs; and as your eye rests upon the glassy waters, it is more suggestive of a placid lake than a part of the old ocean so full of strong and majestic power; and as you stand on the sands and look away over its blue waters, the breakers roll softly at your feet, and in language of beautiful interpretation expressed their name as they bring you peace."

Pacific Grove has neither a Spanish nor a Mexican historical background, but the community has plenty of history. As Miss McLane writes: "Piney Paradise is the history of a town-pattern uniquely different from that of other towns founded in California during the middle 70s. During these years, settlements sprang up under the pressure of economic and social need, but not Pacific Grove. Its object was fundamentally religious.

The community was established and in the words of its motto 'Dedicated to God'."

The first chapter in "Piney Paradise" is entitled "Why Pacific Grove" and describes the beginning in 1875 as a Methodist Seaside Retreat, the site of camp meetings and the first Chautauqua of the west. The land was laid out in lots for camping purposes after David Jacks gave 100 acres and the Pacific Grove Improvement Company had sold the Retreat committee a large tract at a nominal sum. Small roadways ran along at specified intervals. Miss McLane reports that the retreat attracted about 450 the first year and several cottages were built.

This chapter is followed by a series of old and new photographs of Monterey, Pacific Grove, the coastline, the Serra Landing Place, Presidio Hill (1830). and a modern photo of Fort Ord. The entire book is valuable if for no other reason than the numerous, excellent pictures it presents throughout the entire edition and the very fine printing that has been done by the Academy Library Guild.

There are chapters on the old Chinatown, the old town and the new, the old homes, government, unforgettables, tales of fact and fiction, trails, streets and roads, Chautauqua, museum and library, schools, the Hopkins Marine Station, churches, fire department, transportation and utilities, main street, recreation and organizations, Pacific Grove as seen by the press, all of which certainly goes to make up a very complete history of delightful community which exists between Point Joe and Monterey, facing the bay and the ocean.

There is a complete bibliography, index and list of illustrations which makes "Piney Paradise" valuable as an addition to a collection of California and a helpful guide to research of the Monterey Peninsula.

Professor Lucy McLane, a long-time resident, a scholar and poet, writes of her "adopted town with wit, learning and love."