

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

January 4, 1960

The Bouncing Railroad

The original idea of but four wheels under the new electric cars of the Monterey-Pacific Grove railway in the early 1900's, gave the youths considerable joy in bouncing the cars up and down as they did in San Francisco, we were told by Malcome W. Steele of Carmel in a letter to us.

"It seems the cars were always jumping the tracks at the first curve out of Pacific Grove on Lighthouse avenue and the youths of the day were not of much assistance in helping to get them on again," writes Mr. Steele. We suspect that he was one of those youths for he seems to remember many of the incidents during vacation time when he visited here with his parents. The idea of putting a truck under each end solved the problem.

"You mentioned the 'parlor car.' I am glad you referred to it as such. We thought we were the ones who gave it its title when it was brought out on Sundays."

Included in the pictures sent by Mr. Steele was one of Seaside which brought back memories of the two white houses, one of them shown, and which is still standing, although not as easily seen as in former years. Steele also referred to the large oak tree, said to have been the largest in the world. Whether it was or not, it has always been known as such. It was a favorite picnic spot for young and old, the participants either walking or bicycling to Seaside for the day.

In the picture collection there is one photo of the once beautiful shore line at New Monterey, now cannery row. Unfortunately, the Tevis mansion does not show, however, the little house, surrounded by a hedge does. It is most unfortunate the waterfront could not have been kept the way it was, in the opinion of Mr. Steele.

The maze in the Del Monte grounds, shown in one picture was always a must for all the boys and girls, and was at times a difficult place to get out of.

The boat "Queen Esther," owned by Mr. Winston of Pacific Grove, is shown in another photograph, at her berth. Mr. Winston brought her down from Tiburon, where she was built and operated her at times from the Grove to Del Monte Beach bath house pier and often as far as Santa Cruz.

Lastly, there is a photo taken by Mr. Steele in July 1919, of the Carmel beach, from what is now Ocean avenue. "Some people who claim to be old timers, quickly pull in their horns when they look at it. I had just returned from France and World War I, and was on a short vacation in Monterey when I took the picture," wrote Mr. Steele.

"It makes me laugh when I see the local Carmel boys holding up their hands for a ride of two or three blocks from the beach and to go back to the days when we hiked the 17 Mile Drive or to the mouth of the Carmel River and return, or perhaps, rode our bicycles from Pacific Grove to Salinas and return.

"There were the old tramps through the woods at Pacific Grove to the sand dunes or Moss Beach for picnics, etc. To look at what is left of them today brings a note of sadness."

Mr. Steele also remembers that Manuel Duarte used to point down from his glass bottom boat to the wreck of the ship which he claimed was the "Natalia," the boat on which Napoleon escaped from the Island of Elba. Correct or not, it made a good story, concludes our "old timer" letter.