

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Early Days of Girl Scouts

Now that there has been such a refreshing sale of the Girl Scouts' Calendar for 1961, which has already been far beyond expectations, we have chosen to give our readers a bit of the previous history of girl scouting on the Monterey Peninsula.

In 1908, Lord Baden-Powell founded Boy Scouting in England, and the following year Girl Guides were organized under the leadership of his sister, Agnes Baden-Powell. A friend of the Baden-Powell's was an American Juliette Gordon Low, who was a leader of a Guide company in Scotland and later in London.

When Juliette Low returned to her hometown in Savannah, Georgia In 1912 she was inspired by the ideals of Girl Guiding. On March 12, 1912 she organized the first Girl Guide company in the United States. The following year the name was changed to Girl Scouts. Her birthplace now belongs to the Girl Scouts of the U. S. A. and is open to the public. From this small beginning Girl Scouting has spread into every state.

The first troop on the Monterey Peninsula was organized in 1920 In Pacific Grove with eight girls meeting under the leadership of Miss Esther Pesante, a schoolteacher. There were many meeting places for this Pine Cone troop and subsequent troops until the present building was offered for Girl Scout use by the city In 1933. Located at 515 Junipero, the Pacific Grove Girl Scouts House is owned by the city and used by the Scouts.

The second troop was organized by Carmel in 1924 with Mrs. William Newton as leader. The present Carmel Girl Scout House on Lincoln and Sixth was given in 1928 to the Girl Scouts; it was the former Carmel Library. The following year Carmel employed its first paid director.

Monterey was without a troop until 1932, though Monterey girls had earlier traveled over the hill to attend Carmel meetings. The first Monterey troop was formed by Mrs. Gabriel Burnette and Mrs. James Millington. The historic French consulate adobe was moved to its present site on El Estero in 1935, and has been used for Scout activities since, first by Monterey Girl Scouts for troop meetings. This city owned building was preserved, and moved brick by brick, through the

interest and support of the Monterey History and Art Assn.

Each community had its own Scout organization until 1935 when Monterey Peninsula Council of Girl Scouts was formed by Mrs. Ralph Coote, who served as the first commissioner. The council operated as a traditional council with a self-perpetuating governing body until 1949 when a change was made to an association council with an elected board of trustees. The old French consulate has been used solely for council and staff activities for the entire Peninsula for many years.

Under this council's jurisdiction there are now troops in Marina, Fort Ord, Seaside, Del Rey Oaks and Carmel Valley, as well as in Pacific Grove, Carmel and Monterey.

A highlight of council activity was the November 8, 1955 visit of Lady Baden-Powell to the Peninsula following the national convention in San Francisco. A reception was given in her honor at Asilomar and it was attended by hundreds from this council and many busloads came from the surrounding areas. Lady Baden-Powell gave the traditional Scout left-handshake to many Brownies and Girl Scouts following an inspiring talk. A tree commemorating her visit is planted in the front garden of the Monterey Girl Scout House on El Estero.

There is still a supply of calendars at the Scout Houses on the Peninsula for those who wish them either for their own use or for appropriate Christmas gifts.

The theme of the calendar was "Honor the Past - Serve the Future." This year, on October 31, was the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scout founder - Juliette Low. This is the 50th anniversary of Girl Scouting in this country and we will be celebrating this event all year, hence the slogan. The committee tried to carry out this theme in the 1961 calendar.