

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 4, 1960

The Old Sebastian Store

On May 29, a dedication ceremony will be held and a bronze plaque placed declaring Sebastian's Store at San Simeon a national monument. The event will be sponsored by the Historical Society of San Luis Obispo County and the Cambrian Parlor of the Native Daughters of the Golden West.

The town of San Simeon is part of the William Randolph Hearst property with the exception of the Sebastian Store. According to Mabel Plaskett, an old time resident of the lower Salinas Valley, this store has been in constant operation for 102 years. It was founded by a Portuguese whaling captain named Joseph Clark who established a whaling station there. The village is shown on a map published in 1844. In 1859 it was an established whaling station and in 1869 it had a population of 200. In 1864 Captain Clark built a pier and in 1869 produce valued at \$62,850 was shipped from the wharf.

At first the store was kept active by the whaling industry. A yearly take of 21 whales was the maximum limit. Mrs. Plaskett writes. After the whalers left a man named Leopold Frankl bought the store and moved it on skids to its present site. He sold it to L. V. Thorndyke who sold it to Manuel and Mary Sebastian. For many years it was the only store between Monterey and Cambria. Besides the residents of the coast area, other patrons of the store were the miners and a colony of Chinese, working the kelp beds at San Carpojo. The Oceanin Quicksilver Miners and the tanbark and lumber were big industries in the early days and the store supplied the needs of all.

After the Hearst Castle was taken over by the State Division of Beaches and Parks, the tourists came and the little San Simeon store flourished.

Pete, the son of Manuel and Mary Sebastian, is now the owner of the new historical landmark. He still sells everything from fish hooks to jade jewelry. Pete's father, Manuel, came from Portugal at the age of 12, worked as a ranch hand around San Simeon until he filed on a homestead at San Carpojo. Later he sold out to Hearst and worked on the ranches for 35 years even while running the store which he bought in 1908.

To this little store have come celebrities in the course of the years. Mrs. Plaskett names these among many: Sir Winston Churchill, Thomas Edison, and Calvin Coolidge, Mrs. Hearst stopped at the store while John, Bill and George Hearst played with Tony, Mel and Pete Sebastian.

"The little town of San Simeon retains its charm and romantic early day setting. The picturesque Spanish style houses on either side of the one street lined with flowering eucalyptus seem to blend in with the century old Sebastian store and nearly century-old warehouse built near it. The old Poncho Estrada home with its unique mansard roof, fast falling to decay with Castilian roses still blooming about the door is not far from the palatial mansion Hearst later built for the old Don who gave so many years of faithful service to his family." So ends the story as told by Mrs. Mabel Plaskett.