

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Shrine In The Chapel Wall

When the chalk-rock wall was constructed Around the east side of the church which is known as the Royal Presidio Chapel, it was a happy thought of someone to place the small, simple shrine just around the corner from busy Fremont street. Its beauty and simplicity is a lasting memory for all who view it. There are always flowers there, some in vases, some just placed by thoughtful hands in cans, but we have yet to see anyone placing them there. The act is accomplished with such humility and love - no credit can be bestowed.

Harry Downie, who has been on the Peninsula for many years and who has been the moving spirit behind the restoration work at San Juan, Monterey, San Antonio and Carmel Missions, has told us that originally a 30 inch high bronze crucifix had been executed by Ralph Stackpole, a San Francisco sculptor, for the shrine. It was never placed in the niche. The late Louis Hill, a resident of Pebble Beach and former owner of the Vasquez Adobe in Monterey, gave the 'first little carved wooden figure of "Our Lady" for the shrine. It was left untouched there for several years but gradually became mutilated by vandals and at last was taken into storage in the chapel.

Folks missed the little, ancient looking figure within the niche and voiced their sorrow at its removal, so Harry Downie was commissioned to carve a new statue of "Our Lady." He copied the old one with such exactness that her worshippers were pleased and thankful.

The original little wooden figure now sits in another shrine placed on an outside Wall of the Carmel Mission and in her crown a bird used to return each year to build- her nest. Once we saw the evidence of building proceedings. We have not checked with Mr. Downie on this in recent years. "Our Lady" had been restored by Downie, who also carved in stone the two coats of arms which flank the shrine on either side - those of the Franciscan and the Dominican orders.

In the baptistry of the Carmel Mission church is the original baptismal font, restored to its original setting at the time the mission was built. It is carved from native stone and divided into two sections, one for the

baptismal water and the other with an outlet to allow the water to run back into the earth after the baptism.

The upper portion of the font was found by Mr. Downie several years ago beneath a deposit of rock and dirt on the cemetery side of the church. The base had been taken to Santa Cruz but was gladly returned and now the two sections are fitted perfectly together and are being used for the religious service once again.

The huge bronze Holy Water font at the entrance to the Mission church is a perfect example of the work of an artisan in 1823, for it bears that date and the name of Father Vicente de Sarria, first prefect of California, to whom the font was sent by order of Ferdinand IV of Spain.

The Stations of the Cross in Carmel Mission came from either San Antonio or Soledad, according to Harry Downie. Father Mestres, long time priest at San Carlos, believed they were originally in Soledad, but Downie read an inventory made in 1848, which noted that the possessions of San Antonio Mission, when the church was abandoned, had been stored in the sacristy at Soledad. Since Soledad also later became a ruin, it would be difficult to prove to which church the Stations of the Cross now in use at Carmel belonged.