

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 6, 1960

... **From Little Acorns**

We have discovered a fascinating little story about the handsome oak tree which stands majestically upon the grounds of "El Quartel," the new home of the Monterey fire and police departments, on the southwest corner of Pacific and Madison streets.

Many years ago, a seedling or an acorn was planted there by Elena Soler Chaine when she was a very young girl. She became the mother of Mrs. Aimee Chaine Mundell, who died here a short time ago. The Soler adobe home stood on Pacific street, the property extending to Dutra street, where stood the Chaine cottage, which was moved to New Monterey when the city purchased the property a few years ago.

Elena Soler Chaine was the only child of Don Alberto Soler, a native of Barcelona, Spain, who came to Monterey with a group of young Spanish students to enter the Dominican Priory here, and of Dona Francisca Gomez Soler, a native of Mexico, and affectionately called by Montereyans, "Dona Pachita." She came to Monterey with a theatrical troupe from Mexico City and performed in the Molera Adobe (Cooper House), at present the Dorothy Dean dancing academy. Elena's beauty attracted the attention of Robert Louis Stevenson and he honored her by writing a poem, "To the White Rose of Monterey."

If the oak could talk, it would tell of the parties, its branches lighted by Chinese lanterns, of the singing, dancing and guitar playing, Mrs. Chaine being a finished guitarist, and of the afternoon children's parties, with tables spread under its friendly branches, loaded with all the "goodies" that children loved then as well as now.

The wedding of Elena Soler and Achilles Chaine was solemnized in the Royal Presidio Chapel of San Carlos (San Carlos Church) by Reverend Father Angel Casanova. Mrs. Mundell, the widow of Harvey Mundell, was one of six children that blessed the union. Surviving her are two daughters, Mrs. Joan Heartly and Mrs. Harvia Manning, and a sister, Miss Ruth Chaine of New York City, and several nieces and nephews.

May the oak tree planted so many years ago by Mrs. Chaine continue to spread its branches, welcoming all who come to make their home on the beautiful

Monterey Peninsula. It is the hope of her family and many residents that a plaque be placed on the tree in memory of a lovely lady, that so long ago graced the social life of the Monterey that was.

We are indebted to Mrs. Chaine's daughters and to Mrs. Maria Antonia Thompson for the details which make up this charming story about a tree.

A nice and unusual letter came to this desk a few days ago and we think it is so thoughtful we are printing it here today.

"Dear Friends: This is a thank you and payment to the Monterey History and Art Association for the Adobe House Tour. Since I am a serviceman, I was allowed to take the tour at a reduced rate. I enjoyed it so much and received two extra programs from one of the hosts, Admiral Chappell. The enclosed dollar is for the programs and the extra enjoyment.

"I thank you very much for a good time and the privilege of making many new friends. Sincerely Yours, Danny Lies."

Mr. Lies is a member of Co. B. 1st Plt., U.S.A.L.S., Monterey.

Another letter, addressed to the secretary Monterey History and Art Association, from Florence Martin, Yreka, California, who writes:

"I am gathering pictures and looking up the history behind each statue or monument I can find in California for my history project in high school, could you give me any information as to where I could find a picture of the Junipero Serra statue and the Commodore John Drake Sloat Monument in Monterey?"

We have searched the postcard stands and can find no cards of these two monuments. Maybe some kind friend would enjoy sending the two pictures to 836 Pacific street and we will forward them to this young student who has honored Monterey with her request.