

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

June 2, 1961

A Tourist's View Of The Peninsula

"One feels enveloped in California history when visiting the city of Monterey located on California forest and flower bedecked Monterey Peninsula." We repeat these lines to impress upon our readers what writers and tourists think of this historic spot in the far Western area of the United State. The quotation appeared in an article written for the Monitor by Shirley Lee.

Miss Lee writes: "A highlight of the trip here is the Path of History - a collection of historic buildings, sites, and state monuments scattered throughout the former first state capital.

"During the years after World War I Monterey began the preservation of its historic adobes with the result that today it has one of the best-preserved historic areas in the state. Credit goes to the Monterey History and Art Assn., the State of California, the chamber of commerce and the city government. We found that books and free pamphlets containing a Path of History guide map may be acquired at several places, one being the chamber of commerce building, housed in the First French Consulate in California.

"With map in hand, we had only to follow the shaded lines marked on street pavements to spot numbered points of interest. Since this process is a bit tricky by car with the added involvement of traffic, there is an advantage to parking in a public lot designated on the map and walking to nearby buildings.

"Several of the famous adobes are in service, but others are open to the public from 10 a m to 5 p.m. One should allow plenty of time for exploring such state historic monument's as the Old Custom House, the Larkin House, original home of Thomas Oliver Larkin, a well-known pioneer and first and only American Consul to California; and the Stevenson House, where Robert Louis Stevenson lived in the autumn of 1879.

"The latter, built by Don Rafael Gonzales, first administrator of Customs of California, was one of our favorites. "Not only has the two-story whitewashed adobe house been made into a museum of the author containing original manuscripts and personal possessions, its rooms are filled with furnishings, clothes, and other accurate paraphernalia of the era, provided by the History and Art Assn. We especially

enjoyed seeing Stevenson's own small, upstairs room and another room down the hall containing quaintly old-fashioned toys that had once belonged to children living in Monterey. While there Stevenson wrote an interesting sketch of Monterey life entitled "The Old Pacific Capital" (This sketch is available at the Stevenson House.)

"Colton Hall, a whitewashed building resembling an old southern manse, was California's first state capital building. Built by prison labor and court fines, it was the site of the first state constitutional convention in 1849.

"California's first theatre, which got its start in 1846 when Jack Swan, an English sailor built a boarding house and allowed a group of Col. J. D Stevenson's men stationed at the Presidio of Monterey, to use the building to conduct plays, still stands. Though one of the state historical monuments, it is at present consigned to private management for theatrical purposes it is open to the public each day from 10 a m to 5 p.m., free of charge.

"Casa Alvarado is a charming home of the Mexican period once owned by Gov Juan Bautista Alvarado, and Casa Boronda - built in 1817 by Don Manuel Boronda soldier and teacher of boys - is the only adobe probably in California, in continuous use as a residence since that time."

We did not meet the author of this story of Monterey and checking with Mrs. Anne Essler at the Stevenson House she had no recollection of talking with anyone representing the Christian Science Monitor, so we think she did a very fine job of reporting our historic buildings in Monterey.