

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Monument To Stevenson**

*"Doomed to know not Winter, only Spring, a being  
Trode the flowery April blithely for awhile,  
Took his fill of music, joy of thought and seeing,  
Came and stayed and went, nor ever ceased to smile."*

This is the verse inscribed upon the Scottish stone which forms the Robert Louis Stevenson monument located on the site of his roughing stay in a crude cabin on the slopes of Mt. St. Helena in Napa County. The quotation is from the "Silverado Squatters," written while the author was there bravely trying to recover his health. It is regrettable that vandals have chipped the stone and the winter rains have washed out portions of the trail leading to the historic spot, according to Claude T. Faw of Carmel who recently spent some time on the mountain side with his family.

Mr. Faw visited the site of the monument little thinking that the date of the dedication of the monument was fifty years ago, May 7th, 1911. In an attempt to learn more of the dedication and also the names of those who conceived and followed to a successful placing of the marker, Mr. Faw called at the office of the Weekly Calistogan which was established in 1877, three years prior to Stevenson's sojourn of several months. Mrs. Lois Carroll, publisher of the Weekly Calistogan and Miss Kay Archuleta, her assistant, made available the files from which he secured the following description of the dedication ceremonies, and he bought a copy home to us.

It is hoped that we on the Monterey Peninsula may be able to bring to the powers that be of the California Commission of the Division of Beaches and Parks, and also to the public-spirited citizens of Napa County and Calistoga the priceless heritage they have, and that they will restore the trail leading to this historic monument placed in their hands to the memory of Robert Louis Stevenson.

On May 11th, 1911, there appeared this news story covering the Stevenson Day on Mt. St. Helena held on the previous Sunday:

"The dedication ceremonies of the monument erected to commemorate the memory of the well-known novelist, Robert Louis Stevenson, were held last Sunday afternoon on Mount St. Helena at 11:30 o'clock. The

interesting ceremony was held under the auspices of the New Century Club of Napa, assisted by members of the Sierra Club of San Francisco; the Study Club of Brown's Valley, the Woman's Improvement Club of Mt. St. Helena and the Calistoga Civic Club.

"Mrs. P. S. King of the landmark section of the New Century Club spoke as follows in unveiling the monument: "Tablets and monuments are said to be erected for two purposes, either to express sentiment or for architectural effect. This tablet now unveiled and erected by the club women of Napa County is to express sentiment - a two-fold sentiment. It is with pride we remember that Robert Louis Stevenson once lived here upon this mountainside and that here he spent possibly some of the happiest hours of his life.

"But deeper than that local pride is a stronger sentiment, and that inspires the heart of every reader, as he discerns between the lines of Stevenson's books his noble character. His thoughts and books have an essence of immortality - they are the most lasting of human efforts. Temples crumble into ruins, pictures and statues fade and decay, but thoughts and books alone survive ... So "it will be with Robert Louis Stevenson. Years and years from this day his story of this beautiful mountain, told in "The Silverado Squatters," will bring delight to other hearts as it has to ours'."

Mr. Faw has told us that the monument consists of a handsome tablet of Scotch granite, in the form of a book with the quotation quoted above engraved upon it, all surmounting a base of sparkling quartz taken from the Silverado mine on the mountain. It was draped at the 1911 exercises with an American and a Scottish flag, Stevenson having been of Scottish birth. He wrote "The Silverado Squatters" while staying at the mine with his wife in 1880, for the benefit of his health.

Daniel Patten, the owner of the site of the monument, presented a deed to the plot of ground to Mrs. P. F. Powers, Mrs. P. S. King and Mrs. C. A. Johnson of the landmark section of the New Century Club, to act as trustees of the property, and in doing so the donor spoke as follows under the head of "The Transfer."

"My friends, we meet here today for the purpose of dedicating a small plot of ground upon which we have erected a monument to the memory of Robert Louis Stevenson, a great sympathetic writer. Said plot of ground is situated on the eastern slope of Mt. St. Helena, near the bonanza of great wealth, measured by

gold and silver. It is the property of the Mt. St. Helena Mining Co., a corporation. We have granted a permit to Napa Valley women's clubs to erect and maintain said memorial without limit of time and at option of said club. This permit shall be a matter of record in Napa County records.

"It is known that said plot of ground was the camping place of Robert Louis Stevenson while he was in this part of the country in 1880 seeking health and seclusion. He breathed this mountain air and drank of the life-giving water of Mt. St. Helena. His writing has touched a sympathetic chord that is vibrating in all parts of the civilized world. Thousands of tourists may visit this spot and be pleased to see the effort we have made to perpetuate the name of Robert Louis Stevenson."