

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 14, 1961

### **The Silverado Squatters**

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Scotland 111 years ago and died 67 years ago in Samoa where he is buried at his own request. His memory is honored in many places but California has two shrines to the memory of this important author, one in Monterey bearing his name and containing much Stevensonia, and one on Mt. St. Helena in Napa County where he wrote "The Silverado Squatters." It is about the latter memorial that we write today.

Claude Faw of Carmel recently spent a vacation with his family in this beautiful California county and visited the Stevenson memorial erected there in 1911. He also brought back reports written of that dedication in 1911 and has kindly permitted us to use the research material he collected in his enthusiasm to learn more about this famous Scottish author who once spent several months as a resident of Monterey and left his mark here as the author of "The Old Pacific Capital."

Daniel Patton, owner of the property on which the memorial was placed 50 years ago, said at the dedication:

"Robert Louis Stevenson must have known something of the history of this grand old mountain. For thousands of years it has been the trusty sentinel of the Pacific coast. It has seen the changes in the topography of the surrounding country. It has seen the beginning of the present shore line of the great Pacific ocean. Its crown is 4,600 feet above tide of said ocean. Its view to the west is 125 miles to the horizon of the Pacific Ocean. Its view to the east takes in the Sierra Nevada range of mountains with the high peaks reaching up into the line of perpetual view. Its view to the north takes in Mt. Shasta and some mountains of Oregon. Its view to the south takes in the Farallon Islands, Mt. Tamalpais, Mount Diablo and Mount Hamilton and the streets of the proud city of San Francisco.

"This mountain for a vast period of time had no name until in recent years (before 1911) a venturesome princess of Russia, with her male companions, climbed to the summit and spiked down a copper plate, with date and other inscriptions. Then, while her companions were kneeling, she raised her hand heavenward and

proclaimed: 'For all time this mountain shall be called St. Helena.'"

Mrs. W. A. Kirkpatrick, speaking for the Calistoga Civic Club, read a letter on the occasion of the dedication from Mrs. Virgil Williams of Alameda. "The Silverado Squatters" was dedicated by Stevenson to Mr. and Mrs. Williams.

There were over 500 people, club members, and others, present at the ceremony. The San Francisco club members arrived there on Saturday evening and walked to the tollhouse, camping out for the night on the bosom of the extinct volcano. The Napa and St. Helena club members arrived Sunday morning by special train and were conveyed to the mountain side by automobile and stages and were gotten out of town in remarkable short time and the toll road was thrown open to the public by the owners, the Lawley Bros.

"In this house  
in the year 1879  
lived Robert Louis  
Stevenson  
Whose contributions to  
Literature  
Delight the World."

This simple bronze tablet bearing the foregoing legend was unveiled on November 26, 1932, at the old white adobe house on Houston street in Monterey where Stevenson lived and wrote when not "playing chess and discussing the universe," with his friend Jules Simoneau. Stevenson often remarked it is said, "Simoneau personified to him the charm of the old Pacific Capital."

The brief ceremony was conducted by Flodden W. Heron of the Literary Anniversary Club, sponsors of the occasion, Mr. Heron later presented his collection, large and valuable of Stevenson's writings, documents, first editions, pictures, etc., to the State of California to be permanently displayed at the Stevenson House where they may be seen today. It was due to the foresight of the late Mrs. Edith van Anthwerp and to Mrs. Tobin Clark that the house was purchased by them to save it from destruction and later given to the State of California as a historical monument.

Another dedication took place on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 5, 1950, at the Stevenson House when a plaque was unveiled in the rear garden on the occasion of the centennial celebration of Robert Louis Stevenson's birthday. The observance was sponsored by the

Monterey History and Art Assn. The late Thomas Wayne Norris, president of the association at that time, presided, and the late Gelett Burgess of Carmel was the speaker.