

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 24, 1961

### **The Ladies Book Club**

Perhaps the old Carnegie Library on Van Buren street in Monterey was built in 1911 as the result of a letter written to Mr. Carnegie from "The Ladies Circulating Book Club," formed in 1901, by a group of well-known women who took part in civic affairs in those days — 60 years ago. Now that the building has been having its face lifted a bit and the inside renovated to suit another purpose, by the Institute of Foreign Studies, it is most appropriate that we tell about the history of the Book Club and the Monterey City Library.

The annual meeting of "The Ladies Circulating Book Club" was held at Mrs. W. W. James' home on Tuesday, Jan. 17, 1901, at 2 o'clock. The meeting was called to order by Mrs. James, chairman pro tempore, Mrs. J. P. Sargent acting as secretary. Reports of the finances read by Mrs. James Moore, showed that the club owned 16 books, with no funds in the treasury. Motion was made and carried that "We keep our books and form a library association to be known as 'The Monterey Library Association.'"

The above quotation was taken from the first minute book of the new group started on the above date and from the group of 20 women the present public library had its inception.

To continue with those first recordings of "The Ladies Circulating Book Club": Officers for the ensuing year were elected as follows: President, Mrs. Charles Henry; vice president, Mrs. M. M. Gragg; treasurer, Mrs. J. P. Sargent; secretary, Mrs. James Moore. The following committees were appointed by the president: to select books to be purchased: Mrs. Reed, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Clara Zimmerman; furniture, Mrs. W. W. James, Mrs. T. J. Field, Mrs. W. W. Gragg; lights and water. Mrs. J. Harris, Mrs. Charles Casper and Mrs. Finch, one room, Mrs. Henry (mother of Mrs. Herbert Hoover).

A motion was made and carried that the members take turns alphabetically as librarian. Motion was carried and the library was open once a week on Saturdays from 2 until 4 o'clock.

In 1950, Miss Etta Eckhardt, the librarian, showed us a copy of Janice Meredith by Paul Leicester Ford, published in 1899, with the stamp of the Monterey

Library Association still there. Pasted in was a list of the first trustees of the first Monterey Library.

They were as follows: Mrs. W. W. James, Mrs. William Kay, Mrs. Wagner, Mrs. Robert Johnson, Miss Orton, Mrs. Josselyn, Mrs. J. B. Roberts, Mrs. M. M. Gragg, Mrs. Charles Casper, Mrs. Fred Botsch, Mrs. Emily Fish, Miss Bickford, Miss Margaret Jacks, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. C. D. Henry, Mrs. Stafford, Mrs. Conn, Mrs. Claflin, Miss Perry, Mrs. M. Harris, Mrs. J. P. Sargent, Mrs. Ross Sargent, Mrs. Conn, Mrs. Henry Olmsted, Mrs. Hickman, Mrs. Gibson, and Mrs. Percy Dolley.

Evidently these women and their husbands were so well known that given names were not necessary to identify them in the community. Instructions printed for each book asked the borrower to 1, cover the first book received with cloth; 2, as soon as read pass to the member whose number follows yours on the list and 3, no member is to retain a book over two weeks.

On January 23, 1901, a vote of thanks was ordered sent to Mr. Doud Sr. for the use of his rooms on Alvarado street for the library. It was also voted that "Any person may become a member of the association by paying to the librarian the regular dues of forty cents a quarter or \$1 per year payable in advance." Pastors, priests and editors of Monterey were elected honorary members.

In April 1901 the trustees decided to hold a tea in the library rooms and charge 10 cents for refreshments. They now had \$45.05 in the treasury and decided to buy some additional books. Room committee reported that six chairs, a tablecloth, vases and a plant had been donated. Mrs. Charles Henry was appointed to care for the room during the month.

The minutes of Sept. 12 made quite a feature of the gift of a set of Dickens received from Miss Stella Gonzales. A roof garden party was decided on as a means of raising funds on Friday, Dec. 6. The room committee reported as follows: "Owing to the length of time before the Custom House would be available, they had taken the rooms formerly occupied by the Monterey Investment Association at \$5 a month. On motion it was decided that they would rent one room to the Physical Culture Class at a rent of \$2 a month.

In the first year of the library's existence the trustees had had to move three times. All the locations were at the lower end of Alvarado street — where the National Dollar Store is now and across the street in an old

adobe building where the Federal Hotel is now, we are told.

By motion it was decided at the July 3 meeting to open the library rooms for the purpose of entertaining the "Ladies of the Native Daughters and members of the Sloat Monument Committees."

The book committee purchased a set of Stoddard's Lectures in September of 1902 at a cost of \$28 to be paid at the rate of \$2 per month. Also, the purchase of a set of books by foreign authors with Scribner's magazine for \$8 a year at the rate of 50 cents a month. A vote of thanks was extended to Major Sherman for his donation to the library of a picture of the Custom House.

(To Be Continued)