

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The 'Del Monte' Arrives

Our good friend Malcolm W. Street of Carmel continues his story of the history of the "Del Monte Express" today while I take a brief vacation in the Mother Lode country.

At Pajaro (long since Watsonville Junction), the Santa Cruz-bound passengers and their baggage transferred as did the Salinas passengers at Castroville. The rather dull 14 miles from Castroville called for nothing more than looking out to see if the fog was rolling in.

There was the unusual checking of the passing signboards, e.g. Moroccolo, the crossing point of the Spreckels Sugar Co.'s narrow gauge Pajaro Valley Consolidated RR (Spreckels to Watsonville via Moss Landing), such signs as Bardin, Neponset, and Giggling, all ranch names. Seaside with its two white houses up in the sand dunes near the present oil tanks and its giant oak tree, said to be been the world's largest, had its SP marker.

Pulling into Del Monte Station and coming to a stop, the train debarked its hotel passengers, mostly from the parlor car at the end of the string. It might be said that to provide an "escape from democracy," an extra fare of 50¢ was levied. Yes, sometimes Monterey and Pacific Grove passengers managed to ride in style. A fancy two-horse vehicle entered by passengers at the rear and with long seats facing one another landed the guests at the hotel entrance. It must be remembered that only the very wealthy could stay at Hotel Del Monte for the daily rates on the American plan, e.g., with three meals, and meals they were, was something between \$8 and \$10.

Perhaps the private car of some financial tycoon from the East Coast rested on the siding awaiting orders from its owner. Plans might call for its attachment to the north bound Express in the morning.

Leaving the Del Monte Station, a sharp lookout spotted the Beach Baths to the right at the end of the Monterey yards. In season, this was some sort of a very, very small Atlantic City with its boardwalk and pier. The remains are still there if one knows just where to locate them. There was the walled-off pool for ladies and a large one for the big husky and daring men of the day.

We cannot linger too long at the old Beach Baths for we must get on to California's first capital, with its several

hotel runners, baggage transfer men and later a modern electric car of the Monterey & Pacific Grove RR, to take new arrivals to Alvarado street, New Monterey and with a transfer at Alvarado and Franklin, to the Presidio.

No doubt there might be some sort of horse drawn vehicle labeled "To Carmel-by-the-Sea." It was said to be some sort of small colony away over the hill in the woods. The inhabitants of which preferred to live apart from railroad trains, horse and electric cars and the general hustle and bustle of commerce.

No doubt before we leave Monterey on the last stage of the journey, we will note the fishing fleet just offshore on the other side of the tracks all of boats propelled by sail. Again, the little steamer "Gypsy" of the Pacific Coast S.S. Co. might have arrived during the afternoon and tied up at Wharf No. 1 amid much shouting of orders from the bridge to the "stupid" shore blokes or landlubbers who could not be made to understand which was the bow and which was the stern. At times, one would think the "Queen Mary" was docking.

With the warning gong ringing at the Custom House, the "Del Monte" moved westward to the great city of Pacific Grove, a white high fence keeping the track out of sight of passing horse drawn vehicles for the ordinary horse was still not quite sure of the iron horse and might first rise on his hind legs and then take off faster than he ever had before. He was accustomed to horse cars, but a little later, the electric cars made life unbearable for him as he was simply face to face to these modern contraptions of man.

Skirting the beautiful New Monterey shoreline was a treat for the most blasé traveler. Offshore were the unsurpassed marine gardens viewed from glass-bottom boats, the splendid Tevis mansion, the only remains of which is a portion of the tiled-covered wall at Cannery Row. There was McVey Beach at the foot of Hoffman avenue, now littered with junk.

There was the Chinese fishing village just before entering Pacific Grove and it was a real Chinese fishing village, complete with sailing junks.

Coming to a stop at the Grove station, the "Del Monte Express" had added one more trip to its record and like its arrival at Monterey, was met by runners for the Carmelo Hotel, Centrella Hotel, etc. Perhaps there might have been some good man passing out tracts, warning the arriving travelers of the evils of sin and

liquor and the fate which might befall them in the hereafter.

The hard-working engine was uncoupled and placed on the turntable, turned around, perhaps with willing assistance of whatever kids were on hand and backed into its stall for a good night's rest after its long run of 128.7 miles from Third and Townsend streets in San Francisco. It may have been Nos. 1375, 1377 or 1438. It made no difference which one it was to the kids, for it had pulled the Del Monte Express and was the equal of No. 999 of the New York Central, the fastest in the world.

This is the story of one of the best-known trains in the world, known to rich and poor alike. To European noblemen and diplomats. The Southern Pacific no doubt would like to keep it in operation but unfortunately cannot in justice to its stockholders. However, it will never die in the minds of those who knew it in its prime.