

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 26, 1962

Over The Hill To Carmel

Today we will continue the interview with Malcolm W. Steel, who has so delightfully told us of the days directly after the fire and earthquake in San Francisco when he and his family spent the summer vacation in Pacific Grove, as they often did when he was a small boy.

"There was the crossing of the Carmel River over the old wooden bridge and finally the arrival at Point Lobos calling for a look at the mounted bones of a large whale. In looking at what was his small throat, it is with great wonder that a whale managed to swallow Jonah in one gulp, the boys on the wonderland self-conducted tour thought."

Down in the cove, on the west side, was the old Japanese abalone fishery which stood there for many years. If one will examine an old map in the California Room at the public library in Monterey, he will note a rather large town having been planned for the flat area above the cove, no doubt to serve the newly discovered coal seams in nearby Malpassa Canyon. It was said that a small railroad was planned from the mines to the cove, where the coal would be loaded on to ships by means of aerial tramways, Mr. Steel thinks.

No doubt it was with this thought in mind that "rumor spreaders" had it the Southern Pacific was to construct a rail line from the Pacific Grove sand hills to the scene, something which proved to be unfounded. However, had it turned out to be true, there would be no doubt have been a station at the foot of Ocean avenue, labeled "Carmel-by-the-Sea." Perhaps some enterprising character might have operated a cable car line up the avenue with a turn-table at the foot, similar to that at Powell and Market streets in San Francisco, as a "tourist attraction," as is the case in the city today. I am sure Mr. Steel had a smile on his face as he thought of this idea for Carmel.

From Carmel we now travel down the coast with our "historian" of 1906, to make a trip to Little and Big Sur. This was somewhat out of the ordinary for the boys, for it meant boarding Mr. Howland's stage in the neighborhood of 6 a.m. on Alvarado street and arrival at Little Sur along about 3 o'clock. There was a short luncheon at the two-story building, which is still there, at Palo Colorado (or Motley's Landing, as it was known

to shipping men up and down the coast). For it was here that tan bark and redwood lumber were loaded onto steam schooners by means of aerial tramways, as in Mendocino County.

In describing the arrival of the Del Monte Express at Monterey, the writer stated that no doubt a horse-drawn stage was on hand bearing the label "Carmel-by-the-Sea." Certainly no story covering the Monterey Peninsula would be complete were we to overlook this "great metropolis" now known throughout the world, and we can now describe the U.S.A. as a country extending from Times Square on the island of Manhattan to Ocean and Delores on the Pacific, so important has this intersection become with people going nowhere.

Mr. Steel closes his reminiscences with these paragraphs:

"Owing to the superb shore line of Pacific Grove, New Monterey, Moss Beach (Asilomar Beach), the forest, the sand dunes and other familiar spots, it is quite natural that leading artists settled in the area in order to put what they saw on to canvas, and that they did, and are still doing it.

"As time went on, many saw new subjects for their work, over the hills on the shore of Carmel Bay. Again, the quietness of the new area seemed to attract writers of note who won national prominence. People in other parts of California became attracted to Carmel-by-the-Sea as a place for a summer home in order to get away from the heat of the interior. Retired people from the cities liked the atmosphere of Carmel and thought, "Here is a spot unspoiled by the roar of commerce, the plans of chambers of commerce, booster organizations, etc." Yet how sadly they were mistaken in thinking that it would stay just as a group of houses in the woods.