

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 11, 1962

Easter in Mexico

Quotations from the letters of Mrs. Mary L. Greene, former curator of the Old Custom House in Monterey now making her home in San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, will be of interest to her many friends on the Peninsula.

"Holy Week is a very serious time in Mexico. After today no work will be done by anyone. Last Friday was the Day of Dolores—Our Lady of Sorrows. A whole block was given over to flower vendors who sold every kind. The main feature was bowls of freshly sprouted wheat, pale yellow in color. In a day these would turn green. All these were to decorate the home altars. They are usually set up in a window with flowers, tapers, lace and embroidery. Friday night every one was out to walk to see what each had arranged.

"Sunday, of course, was for the palms and there were Indians seated all around the churches, with palm leaves which they were braiding and weaving with intricate designs, then were added colorful flowers.

"Near the market I saw a parade of men—three or four abreast—each carrying a palm as they entered the church. After the palms are blessed they are carefully taken home and given a place of honor. In times of stress they are carefully taken down and waved to ward off evil.

"Today has been a day of great celebration, the birthday of Allende. The San Miguel people are trying to give him his proper place in history for they say he was really the real leader of the independence movement, but Hidalgo gets the credit. Last night the Parroquia and all the Plaza buildings were illuminated. There was a torchlight procession and fireworks complete with "Castillos", skyrockets, band music in the Jardin—they call the central plaza that. Today there was a long parade, huge wreaths were carried by the different organizations and placed at the decorated marble figure of Allende which graces the corner of the building where he was born.

"This afternoon a big bullfight, tonight the ballet and symphony orchestra from Mexico City, last night a huge ball given by Lions Club, tonight another ball—very gay.

"Once in a while a big truckload of lovely plants come from Xochimilco. They are spread along the sidewalk in

front of one of the churches and it is quite a sight to see. The first time he came last summer, he had a white bougainvillea. It was 40 pesos, a little more than three dollars. When I get to the garden planting I certainly want one of those.

"One of the sights of San Miguel and this part of Mexico is the Jacaranda trees which are now in full flowers. When you look down from the heights the whole landscape is dotted with hugh masses of violet bloom.

"We have a bridge class every Monday night. We each pay five pesos. The teacher will not take anything, but the five pesos goes to charity. We have a small orphanage here that always need something and children of the poor are fed breakfast every morning at the building that also house the bibliotheca (library), then some time some poor child needs medical services which the family cannot afford. After bridge we drink coffee and each cookies."