

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Why Do They Come To Monterey?

Bob Reese, historian for the Monterey office of the State Division of Beaches and Parks, has written a letter to me which I am happy to pass on to my readers. I personally think that it very well expresses the sentiments of the great majority of our readers and may convince many others that Monterey is worth saving from too much modernism and destruction of landmarks of historic values, So we pass the contents of the letter on to you. The title is "Why Did You Come to Monterey?"

"As I was entering Monterey on a recent afternoon, I was stopped by a police roadblock. My car was in safe operating condition and I was not returning from a party, so I breathed easy. Rather than police officers approaching, several, men in business suits were making the public contact and it went something like this: "Good afternoon . . . we are conducting a survey . . . Where did this trip originate? . . . Why did you come to Monterey? . . . Thank you for your time and have a pleasant visit."

"At first I didn't think too much of this little episode, but as the afternoon progressed one question kept disturbing my train of thought - 'Why did you come to Monterey?'

"Why did the Buick in front of me with the neatly hung clothes come? . . . Or the little sports car behind me with the Oregon plates and the suitcase strapped to the trunk? What is the attraction that compels people from all walks of life to come to Monterey for a few hours, a weekend, a month, the entire summer? . . . And not just once, mind you. but year after year.

"Why do large business groups and associations like to hold their conventions here? . . . and let's not forget the road races, the Jazz festival, etc., etc., etc.

"The more I wondered, the more involved I became. Part of this attraction without question is the natural features of the area - the ocean and coastline, the cooling summer fogs and the sparkling sunny days. Some come for the purposely built-in enticements of fine restaurants. specialty shops to browse in, or the chance of finding a long-desired piece of antique glass.

"Then there is that almost explainable and yet intangible feature called atmosphere. It is true that

much of this in Monterey has been created by man, but lingo goes way beyond the mere erecting of a place to eat and sleep . . . it is the passage of 193 years of recorded history. It is the unconscious leavings and residue of men which has helped create this atmosphere. It is the result of generations of men and women and their toil, sweat and tears . . . their hopes, fears and disappointments . It is the long lived in look of the old homes on Van Buren, Pacific, Scott, and Decatur streets. It is the aged, black shawled, little lady buying Romano cheese in a small grocery. Monterey has its own uniqueness and individuality - its style of architecture has been copied and automobiles have been named after it.

"Monterey has a tradition born out of the Spanish, Mexican and early American flags which have flown over it. Spanish padres and pirates; whalers and mountain men; fur hunters and poets; bandits and foreign sailors; have all walked her streets . . . It has been the home of men with prices on their heads and the home of men of no value at all. There isn't a city in California which has its roots so deep in the past and yet where a visitor can still enter through the same door as did William Tecumseh Sherman, Thomas Larkin, Richard Dana or Robert Louis Stevenson . . . this is Monterey!"