

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Our Monterey**

WHY DID YOU COME TO MONTEREY? That is the question asked and explained as near as possible, and incidentally very well I think in this letter written to me by Bob Reese, historian of the Monterey Division of the Division of Beaches and Parks. The first section of the letter appeared in the last column of the Peninsula Diary on Monday.

"Let's take a closer look at this history. There are four cities in the United States which are former capitals of one of Spain's provinces. These are St. Augustine, Fla.; San Antonio, Tex.; Santa Fe, N. M.; and Monterey, Calif. Each of these cities still retains fine examples of their Spanish heritage. Spain built this empire more than 450 years ago. Spanish explorers were at Monterey just 50 years after Columbus set sail for the new world. Massachusetts was still just an Indian word in 1542.

"The first 13 states were still unknown. As you can see, Monterey has a long history and many times it has been searched for and dreamed of. The conquistadores searched for it, and found it, and the story goes on . . . even today people, having once found it, keep returning to it.

"Whether we like it or not (and we do like it) historic Monterey is of national significance and as proud citizens, of course, we are eager to accept the responsibility of safeguarding our heritage for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

"From an economic standpoint this approach is sound as we well know there must be a market to sell wares and our potential here to provide many natural undisturbed attractions for visitors to the Peninsula can provide a source of good, stable revenue that could reach undreamed of proportions if we retain and further complement our richly endowed natural and historical attributes.

"All of this hysterical 'sound off' has been much better stated many times in the past and will be re-stated many times in the future. The point is there must be some values here that need careful guarding. This does not mean that all other activities should be subordinate to the natural and historical values, but surely they should and could be so planned, designed and located as to 'get along' with the primary attractions.

"The Monterey redevelopment project is certainly distinctive in the program is to be patterned to highlight certain historical elements in the town. This is to be realized through the cooperative efforts of federal, state and city agencies, private interests and individuals. Due to the popular appeal of the irreplaceable values of Old Monterey there is little question that whatever we do the final product will be viewed with a critical eye nationwide. We have too much at stake to accept anything but the best in the fulfillment of our objectives in Monterey.

"Plans should clearly set forth the historic elements that are to remain inviolate. These would include streets, sites, structures and viewing points that are to be left intact and are to be further enhanced.

"Potential investors and developers are entitled to such plans to adequately prepare their proposals. Of the few privately - owned historic structures involved, surely the talented development designers we have today can prepare studies that will incorporate the old building or buildings in their plans which would be further enhanced by the introduction of compatibly designed new structures, with courts, walks, patios, fountains and other interesting additional treatment that could serve the new facilities as well as effectively displaying the old.

"The fact that a great portion of our American people enjoy westerns and decorate their homes in early American indicates to me that this is a period they want to see perpetuated. Economically I think this is a great asset for Monterey that could be exploited to advantage through the right planning and preservation.

"Our local development groups have made a fine start along these lines and it is hoped when a final plan is adopted that the present historical roots of Monterey will all still be intact and that they will have walked softly down the 'Path of History.'

"When I was stopped by that survey team, which I mentioned several pages back, I had no idea that I would become so involved. Now that I have thought it out for myself, expressed my personal opinions and passed them on to you, feel much better and can get back to my work. It is indeed surprising what a simple question can sometimes do to you . . . for instance:

WHY DID YOU COME TO MONTEREY?"

Very truly yours, Bob Reese