

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 31, 1963

The Gala Merienda

All roads led to Monterey one day in 1933 when the Monterey History and Art Assn. celebrated the city's 163rd birthday on June 3, when the association was less than two years of age. The dons, who in days gone by rode with their lovely ladies in smart carriages, were present only in memory, but many of their descendants came to the little Spanish town for the occasion in their swift shiny motor cars, so The Herald society column reported 30 years ago.

Dancing and all manner of festivities filled the streets, the homes and the hearts of the people. Friday evening, a sunset evening ceremony was held at 4:45 on Presidio Hill, near the Serra monument. At noon Saturday the Merienda was held in Memory Garden.

Among those who came to Monterey for the event were Miss Maria Antonia Field, who opened her home on Munras avenue; Capt. Frank Barrows Freyer, USN, and, Mrs. Freyer, their daughter Engracia Enriqueta Critcher, who was "La Favorita" at the Merienda. The family occupied the Charles Crocker home at Pebble Beach for the weekend. Mrs. Freyer was the great granddaughter of Don Esteban Munras, and was related to Miss Field, who had the same great grandfather. Miss Chidda Arguello, vice consul of Nicaragua in San Francisco, was with the Freyers. She was related to the California Arguellos, so the social editor revealed.

Alvaro de Aguilar and Madame Aguilar arrived on Friday at Del Monte to take part in the ceremonies. Senor Aguilar was consul - general of Spain.

During the program in Memory Garden, Col. Ben Lear, now Gen. Lear, gave the address of welcome and a talk on Portola, his historical predecessor as commandant at Presidio of Monterey. Col. Allen Griffin was chairman of the program, talks were given by Mayors Jack Steward of Monterey, Sheldon Gilmore of Pacific Grove, and John Catlin of Carmel. Those were the days when there were only three mayors on the Peninsula.

Greetings from the Republic of Spain, Consul General Alvira Aguilar, and the Republic of Mexico, Consul Enrique Gravo, preceded a selection by the 11th Cavalry Band.

J. R. McKillop, superintendent of Monterey Union High School, gave a talk on the life of Junipero Serra and

Excelentisima Maria Antonia Field read Bret Harte's "Angelus." Rev. James Culletin, D.D., formerly of the Royal Presidio Chapel in Monterey and now in Fresno, gave the benediction. Retreat was sounded at 5:30, as the national colors were lowered, and the audience stood at "attention."

On Saturday high mass was celebrated in the Royal Presidio Chapel, Rev. Culletin, the celebrant. At noon the Merienda was held in Memory Garden, Old Pacific Building. Col. Roger S. Fitch, president of the History and Art Assn., sponsors of this celebration, introduced Carmel Martin as toastmaster and presented "La Favorita."

There were greetings from the representatives of Spain and Mexico; after which Spanish and Mexican vocal and instrumental selections were given by Fernando M. Feliz, attache of Mexican consulate, and Lorenza Feliz.

Mrs. Ben Lear cut the large and beautiful birthday cake, at this first Merienda sponsored by the Monterey History and Art Assn. Music and dancing followed.

In the afternoon bocca and a horseshoe contest were held in the Old Custom House Plaza. There was a concert in the Friendly Plaza by the 11th Cavalry Band. In the evening, an exhibition of native Japanese pastimes, in the Plaza de Muelle (plaza by the wharf).

A fishing fleet night carnival in the inner harbor was the entertainment for the evening. So ended the celebration of Monterey's 163rd birthday in 1933,