

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Steinbeck Honored By French

Recently a Paris, France, newspaper published an edition honoring John Steinbeck and his writing. I have just received a translation of the parts concerning Cannery Row. A reporter flew to Monterey from Paris to gather the material, remained a few days and then returned to Paris to write his article, titled (Rue de la Sardine."

"For the tourist, who upon arriving in Monterey, hurries to Cannery Row, the shock is cruel," writes the French reporter. "For a hundred or so meters the street is empty, deserted under the brilliant California sun. On either side the abandoned canneries raise their dirty white walls. Broken panes make black holes in the windows. Above the street, covered bridges join the empty buildings like so many aerial ramps for ghosts. One might call it an area stricken by plague, from which the inhabitants have fled. One's footsteps resound sadly on the pavement as one approaches a bend which marks the turn in the road and hides the rest of the street. It is here that one encounters the first unexpected sign of life.

"On a door of a hangar is a sign saying, 'Gamble's Galleries.' Through the half-open door are seen paintings arranged on the wall. The converted cannery houses an art gallery! Opposite it a lived-in little house, decorated with baroque works of art, announces the sale of antiques. Soon among the abandoned warehouses and the decaying walk, the signs of a hidden activity become more numerous. A restaurant is hidden behind such a facade, a store has opened its doors in another. An innocent looking structure bears the equivocal designation 'Bear Flag Building,' where Steinbeck located a certain house - happily tolerated - which played such an important role in his book, 'Cannery Row.' Near by a prominently displayed sign announces the presence of a real estate agent in charge of commercial sites on the street. It is he who holds the key to the mystery. He doesn't make the mistake of betraying the secret."

At the time that Steinbeck wrote "Cannery Row," the Row knew an intense activity. The romantic writer depicted the excitement which was imparted in every direction whenever the fishing boats returned to port. "The workers surged forth from every direction and

hurried toward the docks. The fishermen cast upon the shores a sparkling, scaly wave."

(To be continued)