

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 15, 1964

Grove Retreat in 1875

The little handbook of Monterey and vicinity, published in 1875, also includes Monterey's sister city. Pacific Grove, then called Pacific Grove Retreat - the M. E. Encampment Grounds.

"The eastern boundary is about one-half mile west of Chinatown, and following the sea-shore, the tract extends to the line fence of the dairy farm this side of the lighthouse. This last boundary is marked by a conspicuous pile of rocks, which, looking as if it might be a Druidical monument, is the termination of a promontory that breaks the force of the northwester, and shelters the sea line of the tract. Under the lee of the promontory is a beautiful little Cove, possessing a smooth beach, and being almost entirely free from surf."

The above quotation gives the reason for selecting this beach as the site for the bathing houses. Behind this cove were pine woods, interspread with oaks, enclosing an area of sufficient extent and smoothness for accommodation of any congregation of auditors. Here, therefore, as this survey indicated, was to be placed the stand for the preachers. The site selected for the hotel, or hotels, occupied ground centrally located with reference to the view of the sea. A broad avenue was to traverse the grounds, with side streets separating lots upon which villas were expected to be erected.

In that year, 1875, Pacific Grove was beginning to be a real estate man's paradise. One hundred acres were divided into residential lots, a park, a pleasure ground, a grand avenue, minor streets and avenues, and the town. The lots were divided into sections, ranging from 30x60 to 30x125.

The preacher's stand was to be "an elegant structure, carefully and substantially built by Prinz of Monterey, containing a platform for ministers and seats for the choir. It was to face the congregational grounds, which were to be arranged in a perfect circle, 200 feet in diameter with a ring of tents around it, and a roadway of 75 feet."

Five thousand people were accommodated on benches and the whole was covered by the shade of pine trees - "tall straight trees, through whose branches, the sunlight falls subdued."

There was a restaurant measuring 33 x 90 feet, but a short distance from the congregational grounds. It was run on a ticket system by R. C. Worms. There was also a grocery and provision store and a furnishing and clothing store in close proximity and with the same floor space, as the restaurant.

On the opposite side of the street from the shops there were, in 1875, the dormitories, each 24 x 50 feet, and a laundry. "Admirable arrangements were made for the conveniences necessary to civilization," according to the publicity the retreat had in 1875.

In the same year new tents could be bought on the grounds at wholesale prices or rented at a very low figure. Ordinary campers, except during a meeting, were charged 50 cents a head, which included water, wood and cleaning up.

"The liberality and untiring energy of Mr. David Jacks should not go unnoticed, for by the aid of this gentleman's purse and advice, many apparently insurmountable difficulties have been surmounted." So ends the story of the Pacific Grove Retreat.