

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 4, 1964

Ghosts of Padres on Old Trail

There are more legends surrounding the trail of olden days over the hill from old Monterey to the Carmel Mission. Folk from Monterey went to attend services at the mission for the reason that San Carlos in Monterey was the Royal Presidio Chapel, built within the Presidio walls.

When the trail emerged from the forest to the open field again, it swung down the gentle slope to the site of the present shrine of Father Serra, carved and set up many years ago by the late Jo Mora a well-known and beloved Peninsula artist and author. Only bordering trees and wildflowers were there then. Once a member of San Carlos parish was walking up the path toward Monterey. He had in his handkerchief a bit of earth from the graves of the early padres. Ahead of him on the trail three brown-robed figures suddenly appeared, walking slowly as they turned their faces toward each other in quiet conversation.

He knew they were not real. He knew they were spirits, come back to tread again the way they once had loved, brought perhaps by the earth from their graves, that he had with him. A strange peace pervaded him. After a while they disappeared, vanished into thin air, even as they had come, but he never forgot that he had seen three of the Franciscan padres.

From the site of the monument to Father Serra, the path turned to the left, passed through the silent woods, where the populous town of Carmel-by-the-Sea now is seen, and entered the little swale called the Canada Rosario, at the mouth of which San Carlos Mission now stands. Buried treasure, never to this day found, lies hidden somewhere in the Canada Rosario. It belonged to the church and was hastily secreted beside the well-worn trail when a strange vessel, supposedly a pirate ship, appeared in the bay of Carmel one early morning.

The good brown earth was the only safe repository for gold and silver and jewels in those days. Sometimes it was too safe, sometimes refusing to give up again that which had been entrusted to it, as in this case. The unknown craft drew close, then put to sea again, no reason ever being learned for her approach, but the treasure was never retrieved. The boy who had buried

it, forgot in his excitement where he had placed it. So there it remains, lost, beside the lost trail.

"The watchword of today is progress, and progress means the passing of yesterday. Whether we like it, or not, we are living in today. The hands of the clock cannot be turned back. Yet now and then we like to picture for ourselves the past, when California was young and a veritable paradise. The Monterey Peninsula was a lovesome spot, long ago, and that trail a lovesome trail, that led from the pretty little town, with its few adobes, over the hills and away to the church with its superb setting of river and mountains. Unmarred by civilization, marked only by the stations of the Cross, what would we not give if our feet could tread that sweet and leisurely path, just one time. It cannot be. We live in today, the watchword of which is progress." (From "Monterey Trails".)