

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 6, 1964

Words to Old Songs

We wish that some of our readers could remember the words of some of the old-time lullabies or folk songs sung in Old Monterey, to answer this correspondent:

"A neighbor, Joaquin Soto, sings a lullaby of 75 years ago, which his father crooned to him. Since his father was born in 1832, in Monterey, it may have local roots; but it probably goes back to Mexico, since it mentions a little horned toad. Naturally, it is slightly garbled, since Mr. Soto never learned to read or write Spanish. I'd like to get it straight.

"I have seen the collection by William McCoy, including 'La Indita,' which he first heard at Jolon. I know the Charles F. Lummis collection. Naturally, most songs suggest Mexican, rather than California roots."

The inquiry came from Paul Squibb, Box 331, Cambria, Calif.

Here is another request for information which I am happy to provide, as I knew "Tin Can Greene."

"I am seeking information regarding the name or initials of a former resident of Monterey, now deceased. He was known affectionately among his friends as 'Tin Can Greene.' He was known as the originator of the use of used tin cans by nurserymen for the storage and easy handling of plants. A visit to Golden Gate Park yesterday indicates they have no information that such a person ever existed. The director of the Stribling Arboretum and editor of its 'Notes from Stribling Arboretum' has suggested that I write an article about Mr. Greene's contribution to horticulture for inclusion in the monthly issue of the California Horticultural Society's Journal."

Harry Greene's home still stands on Lighthouse avenue in New Monterey and is now an antique shop. There was a large redwood tree in the garden to the left of the house which became, in Harry Greene's regime, probably the first outdoor lighted Christmas tree on the Peninsula. Greene loved forests so well that he grew a remarkable one himself, in thousands of tin cans of five-gallon size. He grew every manner of kind that would grow about Monterey Bay, native and alien. Early in 1890 Greene started the Monterey Tree-Growing Club. It began with 10 members who met weekly. By city ordinance, after his death, the little island in the middle of El Estero Lake was named Harry Greene Island, in

honor of the man who had done so much to make Monterey beautiful.

Greene was born in San Francisco and claimed to be the only person alive who had attended the first Admission Day ball, September 9, 1850, asleep in a basket in the cloak room, while his parents danced.