

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 17, 1965

Heirloom Gifts

A small wax figure of San Carlos in a primitive little shrine built many years ago in Monterey hangs in the museum of the old Pacific Building. It was given to the Monterey History and Art Assn. several years ago by Lawrence Tibbitt Wardell.

Mr. Wardell inherited the saintly figure from his grandfather, Ponciano Manguares, son of Graciano Manguares, the owner of the property now known as the Gutierrez adobe.

Graciano was also the grantee from Spain of El Saucito Rancho, 2,211 acres, in 1833 and confirmed in 1858 by the government to John Wilson, Joseph Swain and George Harris. His wife was Maximiana Gongora. They had five children of which Ponciano was the third, born in 1831. Graciano was an auxiliary judge in Monterey in 1842.

The little wax figure given to the association is probably about 100 years old and was brought from Rome, Mr. Wardell was always told by his mother.

It is dressed in silk and lace, made by the devoted hands of the grandmother of the family. San Carlos is centered in a shrine made from a small bureau drawer, the interior papered in a pattern popular in the early days and to which a number of small religious pictures have been attached.

Artificial paper flowers surround the figure. Perfect features and glass eyes make the picture look very realistic; molding of the hands, the feet and the entire body appear to have been the work of an artist.

Mr. Wardell also gave the association a "faja" or Spanish sash, which has been in his family for many years. Both articles may be seen in the Pacific Building, on loan from the history and art association.

It was in 1892 that Msgr. Ramon M. Mestres came to Monterey as the parish priest of San Carlos Borromeo de Monterey. He later became vicar-general of the Monterey-Fresno Diocese. Father Mestres died Aug. 5, 1930, leaving much that still attests to his devotion to the two churches under his care and to the historical heritage which has been left to residents of the Monterey Peninsula.

When the chalk rock wall was constructed around the east side of the church known as the Royal Presidio Chapel, it was the happy thought of someone to place the small, simple shrine just around the corner from busy Fremont street.

Its beauty and simplicity are a lasting memory for all who view it. There are always flowers there, some in vases, some just placed by loving hands in cans, but we have yet to see anyone placing them there.

Harry Downie, the moving spirit behind the restoration work at San Antonio, San Juan, Monterey and Carmel missions, has told me that originally a 30-inch-high bronze crucifix was executed by Ralph Stackpole, San Francisco sculptor, for the shrine but never placed in the niche.

The late Louis Hill, a resident of Pebble Beach and former owner of the Vasquez adobe in Monterey, gave the first little carved wooden figure of "Our Lady" for the shrine. It was left untouched there for several years but gradually became mutilated by vandals and at last was taken into storage within the chapel.

Folks missed the little, ancient-looking figure within the niche and voiced their sorrow at its removal, so Harry Downie was commissioned to carve a new statue. He copied the old one with such exactness that worshippers were pleased and thankful.

The original little wooden figure now sits in another shrine placed on the outside wall of the Carmel Mission and in her crown a bird used to build a nest each year.