

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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An Old Bouquet for Monterey

Newton D. Drury, then chief of the Division of Beaches and Parks, wrote under the title "Chiefly Speaking" in the August 1951 issue of the division's News and Views:

"Renewal of old associations at Monterey this last month was profitable as well as a pleasant experience. The Merienda, or birthday party, of the City of Monterey (181st) was held in Memory Garden of the old Pacific Building and was a colorful affair."

This year the Merienda will be held Saturday, June 5, observing the 195th birthday and the anniversary of the landing here of Gaspar de Portola and Father Junipero Serra to claim California for Spain in 1770. Sponsored by the Monterey History and Art Assn., it will again be held in the Memory Garden.

Mr. Drury, now retired, continued: "I was able to say to the history and art association and their guests, with all sincerity, that Monterey seemed to be to be in the forefront among the communities in America that had been successful in preserving many historic buildings and, equally important, much of the charm and atmosphere of the earlier day.

"With District Supt. Lee Blaisdell and Asst. Supt. Jess Chaffee, our splendid group of monuments in Monterey were visited – the Custom House, First Theater and Stevenson House were visited. This is as fine a group of historic buildings as any state can boast.

"Our custody of them has enhanced their value to the people of the State of California, and I was glad to say (it) to Mrs. Mary L. Greene, Mrs. Hartigan, Mrs. Kneass (now Mrs. Alfred Elkinton) and others responsible.

"Year after year, the museum exhibits in these buildings, through research and intelligent selection by the Monterey History and Art Assn. and the curators of buildings, are becoming simpler and unified in telling the story appropriate to each site."

Since this praise from Mr. Drury was written, Mr. Blaisdell has retired from his post and Mr. Chaffee is the present superintendent. Mrs. Greene, Mrs. Hartigan and Mrs. Elkinton are also enjoying retirement.

The old Pacific Building, The Casa de Oro, the Gutierrez adobe and the Larkin House have been added to the list

of monuments owned by the state, as well as the Serra Landing Site.

Mr. Drury went from Monterey to San Juan Bautista Historical Monument. He named it "another example of the eloquent re-creation of the atmosphere of a sleepy old town and plaza of the Spanish and Mexican regimes, with the Plaza Hotel and the Gay Nineties' livery stable as a further page in our historical past.

"The Castro adobe, restored with restraint, is undoubtedly one of the most perfect examples of early California architecture, besides having unquestioned symmetry and charm; it is authentic.

"In contemplating it, as well as other historic buildings in our system, and our future policy with respect to them, it is well to bear in mind the dictum of the historians of the National Park Service:

"It is better to preserve than repair;

It is better to repair than restore;

It is better to restore than to reconstruct."