

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 16, 1965

The Day's Mail

It is amazing, the number of inquiries that come in the mail from faraway places asking for information about the history, individuals, pictures, or family trees, or maybe to sell something historically valuable to our community.

Today I have chosen a few interesting examples that have been answered to the best of our ability.

The first: "The Monterey Chamber of Commerce suggested that I write to you to see if you could assist me in a search for a small picture of the old building 'El Cuartel,' the first American capital building in California, built by the Mexican government in the early 1840s.

"I am trying to complete a collection of all the old buildings in California that were used as seats of government, and the old one of Monterey is the only one I do not have. If there is anything showing it in a brochure, pamphlet, etc., I would appreciate being able to obtain it."

The picture of El Cuartel was sent off to the correspondent, copied and returned. The inquiry came from La Jolla.

This one came from Watsonville: "In my possession is a 10x14 inch book. It is Vol. III, No. 1, called 'Del Monte Wave.' It was published in 1888 in Monterey at 10 cents per copy. It is exceptionally interesting and quite amusing, my having lived by 70 years in Monterey County, and my husband knew many of the places and people mentioned. Would you know the value of this paper and price I could get for it?" It has now been sold.

This letter came from Dunsmuir, Calif.: "In the spring of last year I had the pleasure of visiting you in your home and showed you Sinclair Lewis's letters to my grandmother, Josephine Foster of Carmel.

"At that time I was attempting to track down a photo of the old Leese house in which Robert Louis Stevenson first stayed on arriving in Monterey. You had it!" (In the collection of pictures owned by the Monterey History and Art Assn.)

The letter continues, "In the course of the conversation you showed me two old prints of an "illustrious trio" enjoying what was apparently a reunion – Joaquin Miller Charles Warren Stoddard and George Sterling. I

would like to obtain each for the new museum located near Dunsmuir."

The pictures were duly photographed and sent off to the gentleman.

Here is another letter, from Montrose, Calif.: "For 40 years I have postponed writing this letter! According to annals, Lt. Robert Tansell, Virginian, U.S. Marine Corps., was named as military governor of California during the Mexican War.

"This information is engraved on his tombstone in Virginia. The gallant young officer held Fremont, Stockton, etc. in high esteem. He was chosen to go on Commodore Mathew Perry's expedition to Japan and was one of the captains to receive a sword from the emperor. Any information you may have will be gratefully received by his granddaughter."

Here is a short question: "Many times we have passed Camphora Gloria Road on Highway 101. Do you know where the name came from or who she (?) was."

We will end with this note, for there are always inquiries on this subject:

"When are the most of the state-owned historical monuments open to the public? The answer: Custom House, open daily; Pacific Building, closed Wednesday and Thursday; Stevenson House, closed Thursday; Larkin House closed Monday and Tuesday; First Theatre, closed Tuesday.

Sunday evening a bus full of adults arrived in Monterey from the University of the Pacific, under the direction of Dr. Glen Price of its history department. They spent the night here and continued south Monday morning to visit each mission from Sonoma to San Diego and return after a week on the tour.