

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

May 21, 1965

### **Ode To Monterey**

"Historic Monterey, unquestionably, has figured more extensively in romance, picture, poetry and song than any other city in the American Union" are the opening lines of a booklet entitled "Historical Monterey and Surroundings," published in 1899.

It is a special edition issued by the Monterey Cypress that was presented to me by Mrs. Tony Castro of Pacific Grove.

"The great breadth of magnificent scenery, salubrious climate, historic associations and the calm and beautiful waters of her crescent-shaped bay, have been theme of the poet and the inspiration of the artist, since the earliest days of the Spanish regime down to the present day," the introduction declares.

The editor quoted the San Francisco Chronicle's praise of Monterey's wildflowers:

"Whosoever has seen a little of California will forgive us for loving our wildflowers. There are so many and so beautiful that we cannot withhold the expression of our admiration. We used to love, and we love yet, the modest shy little violet that in the East was almost snow-born and which timidly put forth its azure petals on the first touch of May.

"We loved it for associations broken up long ago, but how little is the whole sisterhood of flowers in the East compared with the glories of a California spring?

"We go out upon our hills at that season and find miracles of beauty everywhere under our feet – not single flowers but a wilderness of beauty, never to be forgotten. We have counted in one morning 29 varieties within less than the area of an acre, and some of them exquisitely pure in color and in symmetry.

"In all the foothills and mountainsides of California, even far into its arid summers, flowers burst up from among rocks which seem hardly able to give a foothold for aught so delicate and fragile, challenging your admiration, and almost seeming to rejoice that the wandering feet of a stranger have led where his eyes could feast upon their beauties which else had never been seen by man."

I have chosen this biography from the "Historic Monterey" to repeat here because of the family it concerns:

"Among the unique and interesting establishments which go to make up the complement of our commerce, none is more distinctive of California than that of a curio dealer. A worthy representative of this profession, and popularly and widely known and patronized, is Mr. J.K. Oliver of the Custom House Art Emporium at the foot of Alvarado street, just opposite the old Spanish Custom House.

"Mr. Oliver is a wholesale and retail dealer in native and foreign shells and curios. Mexican drawnwork, carved leather goods, Indian baskets, relics, etc., from many tribes. He is also a manufacturer of moss and flower books with whalebone backs, shell baskets and many other beautiful and useful articles; the most complete assortment of souvenir spoons and old fishing net for decorating.

"Mr. Oliver has lived in this community for six years, three years of his time being spent as a teacher in the University of the Pacific, afterward establishing his business in 1896. He was formerly a teacher in colleges in the East for 15 years, and two years spent in Europe, studying art and traveling.

"Mr. Oliver is making a specialty of conchology, and intends to publish a book on the same accentuating Monterey Bay shells. Mr. Oliver is a member of the Monterey school board and vice president of the Monterey Progressive Assn. He is public-spirited, and always willing to assist any cause, having for its object the betterment of Monterey."

The Art Emporium is now gone and we are without all the lovely and interesting things we once saw there. We also miss Mr. and Mrs. J.K. Oliver but their son, Myron Oliver, and his family are with us and still taking part in the community life of Monterey.