

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Good Old Days

"We do not realize the charm of the good old days of Monterey until—" The words of Colonel Fitch went unfinished because Carmel Marin Sr. insisted that Paul Parker of Salinas tell just one more charming incident of the "good" old days.

These lines were written in 1931 when the Monterey History and Art Assn. membership met at the San Carlos Hotel for dinner, with Parker as the speaker, and Col. Fitch presided as president of the association.

Paul Parker, now a resident of Berkeley, bared all the scandal of early days in Monterey when the only criminals worth noticing were horse thieves and murderers. Sixty-three murders in one year and not one "legal killing!" Thirteen men shot, hung, decapitated, or otherwise annoyed, over one woman's money! Since time has placed these bold, bad bandits securely under sod, Parker's tragedies raised ripples of laughter without standing any hair on end. One guesses these conditions were reversed when he first heard some of the tales from his father.

Astonishing as the stories themselves was the manner of their telling. Yarn after yarn was spun by Parker, authenticated by dates, locations, names and records, without referring to notes. The tales were colored enough to reveal the talents of a true storyteller and so accurate as to prove Parker a real historian.

Stories of early Indians of the coast country and the hills preceded the more exciting "thrillers." Their habits of life and relations with neighboring tribes were realistically described with incidents illustrating both.

Parker blamed the coming of clothes and shelter for the ravages of consumption among the tribes, but who knows? It might have been their diet, since they eagerly ate dead seals and whales washed up on the beaches.

Other speakers at the dinner in 1931 referred briefly to historical topics. Mrs. Laura Bride Powers, author of "Old Monterey" and the first curator of the Old Custom House spoke of the significance of the date April 14 in recent Spanish history and ancient California events.

Carmel Martin spoke of interest the History and Art Assn. might have toward celebrating the 150th anniversary of Father Serra's death. Miss E. Charlton

Fortune, chairman of the art committee, told of a plan to bring the work of artists before the students of the high school and of Luis Mora's generosity in talking to the young people and inviting them to his studio.

Louis Slevin had a large collection of photos of Monterey adobes taken before and after restoration, the two groups dating about 1902 and 1932. Slevin saw atmosphere deterioration in each rejuvenation.

Col. Fitch had many items of interest to pass on, among them an announcement that money to place permanent markers at more than 20 historical spots around the Peninsula, was at hand.

Gordon Knoles pleased his audience greatly with two solos: "Poor Man's Garden" and "Water Boy."

Mrs. Vera Peck Millis, Col. Gibson and George Seideneck composed the committee in charge of the successful evening and furnished the beautiful wild flowers that decorated the tables 34 years ago.

So very many of the faithful members and organizers of the history and art association are no longer with us, but they have not been forgotten by the old-timers.

I feel that I am one of them, for I was present at the meeting reported above and personally knew all the members present. I rejoice that the association still exists and is accomplishing so much to keep past history alive today.