

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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San Francisco Cable Cars

Mr. Malcolm W. Steel of Carmel has supplied The Peninsula Diary with a column for today and we sincerely thank him for we, like many others, have been "suffering" from a case of the flu.

Mr. Steel writes: "As a native San Franciscan, the cable cars were the only means of public transportation during the early days of our youth, however, for several years prior to the great disaster of 1906, electric cars started to make their appearance.

"While it is thought that the electrics would be unable to climb any of the hills, it was soon learned that they could on ordinary ones. The steepest in Monterey for the electric cars was that from Alvarado street up Franklin to the Presidio with another having been planned to go over the hill to Carmel.

"The first cable cars in San Francisco consisted of the dummy, a small open car on which the gripman rode and who was surrounded by open air seats. Attached to the dummy was the trailer, a small, closed car for the less hardy persons. Men were usually ashamed to be seen traveling inside.

"In effect it reestablished the Market street cable lines after the disaster, as electric lines, such political corruption took place giving San Francisco a bad name. The basis being a demand on the part of many to have the electric wires put underground and the cars using the old cable slots in the roadway as a means of making the electrical connection rather than overhead wires which the United Railroads wanted.

"While my memory does go back as far as the dummy and trailer days on the California St. Cable RR, some of us noted that the old horse cars on the Pacific Grove - Del Monte run, prior to electrification along about 1907 or 1908 were exactly the same as old photographs of the San Francisco cars as well as bearing the same markings which incidentally still exist today. Under the circumstances, one can be positive that when the California St. line went over to longer, double ender types, the small trailers found their way to the Monterey Peninsula.

"In going through the Custom House for the 99th time, I noticed a plate of one of the old San Francisco, California street trailers which had been converted to

an electrical car. Again, I can refer to a book in the Monterey Library, 'This Was San Francisco.' On the cover of the book is a picture of a typical cable car of the older type, this trailer no doubt having been dragged back and forth between Pacific Grove, Monterey and Del Monte.

"The type of cable car to be seen today on the Powell street, North Beach Line of the Municipal Ry., viz with an open section at one end and a closed section at the other, came into existence a number of years prior to the great fire. Some of these cars were of an entirely open-air type and were brought out a few days during a hot spell.

"As everyone knew that hot spells in San Francisco . usually lasted not more than three days in a row, one could hear the remarks when they saw the open cars, 'I see the fog will be in tomorrow.' Right they were 90 per cent of the time.

"While San Francisco started the cable cars, Oakland had them as did Los Angeles, Chicago, Melbourne, Australia, Seattle, Tacoma and no doubt many other cities.

"For many, many years, we paid no attention to cable cars. Now, however, since poets and writers have taken up their cause, one can hardly get on board them for the swarms of tourists who probably would pay a half dollar a ride if the city cared to raise the fare. So great was the demand that the Municipal Ry, built a turntable at the Aquatic Park (now Victoria Park) at a cost of many thousands of dollars for their benefit.

"As to Victoria Park, when completed, it will have exhibits, not only of old ships, ferry boats, etc., but also of old horse and cable cars, as well as old narrow-gauge trains for the visitors to see how travel was taken in 'Yesterday.' I am happy to have played a very small part in the general idea and hope it turns out to be a success.

"How about one of the cable cars going up and down on Franklin street in Monterey? Perhaps then Monterey could be put on a paying basis by tourists and residents alike?"