

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

July 14, 1966

Robert Louis Stevenson

"In this house in the year 1879 lived Robert Louis Stevenson—essayist, storyteller and poet, whose contributions to literature delight the world."

This simple bronze tablet bearing the foregoing legend was unveiled on Nov. 26, 1932, on the old white adobe house on Houston street in Monterey where Stevenson lived for a time and wrote when not "playing chess and discussing the universe" with his old friend Jules Simoneau. Stevenson often said, "Simoneau personified to him the charm of the Old Pacific Capital."

It was Simoneau's daughter, Mrs. Thomas Fussell, who drew aside the American and British Flags to reveal the marker following an introductory address by the late William C. Van Antwerp, according to the accounts published at that time. The address had been prepared by the late Mayor J. P. Sandholdt, who because of illness, had not been able to be present. The brief ceremony was concluded by Flodden W. Heron of the Literary Anniversary Club, sponsors of the occasion.

I was present at this ceremony, hanging over the white picket fence, just one-half block from the old Monterey Peninsula Herald building on the site where the Washington adobe hotel building had formerly stood.

It was Mr. Heron who later presented his valuable and large collection of Stevenson's writing, documents, first editions, pictures, etc., to the State of California to be permanently displayed at the Stevenson House. The collection arrived and was catalogued and arranged for the pleasure of the guests before the observance of the 100th anniversary of the birthday of Stevenson.

Others represented on the memorable day in 1932 were Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Rothchild, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Sutro and Mr. and Mrs. Earl Weller, all of San Francisco, in addition to Mrs. Tobin Clark and Mrs. Edith Van Antwerp, both now deceased, the two women who are credited with having preserved the Stevenson House as a memorial "to the literary and personal charm of the great teller-of-tales." |

The next day, Gelleth Burgess was the speaker at the 100th anniversary observance. Mr. Burgess had been a friend of Stevenson and Strong families for many years. It was Burgess who designed the tomb and the lettering for the marker on Stevenson's grave on the top of a

mountain in Samoa, where R.L.S. died in 1894, 72 years ago. Burgess is the author of "The Purple Cow", which, most everyone remembers him by, and many other tales. He lived in Monterey and Carmel off and on for many years until his death a number of years ago.

It was in 1941 that Colonel Roger S. Fitch, president of the Monterey History and Art Association, was appealed to by Mrs. Antwerp and Mrs. Clark to act as intermediary between themselves and the State of California in their desire to present the Stevenson House to the State of California that it might be forever preserved and open to the interested public. It was accepted and has been restored and now houses what is thought to be one of the finest collections of Stevenson's works and other mementos in existence.

At present the south end of the Stevenson House is being given some very needed repairs, because of termite invasion. Old beams now badly eaten, will be replaced with steel beams and other needed restoration completed. The children's room will be closed during the work period. The rest of the house will be open to the public as usual.