

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

November 24, 1967

### **An Historical Meeting**

" 'We do not realize the charm of the good old days in Monterey until...' The words of Col. Roger Fitch went unfinished because Carmel Martin insisted that Paul Parker tell just one more charming incident of the 'good old days' in Monterey."

The above paragraph appeared in a story in early January of 1931 reporting the first dinner of the Monterey History and Art Association. It had been organized in December of 1930 in the Old Custom House in Monterey.

That was thirty-seven years ago, and I am proud to say that I was there.

"Before the association gathered for dinner at the San Carlos Hotel," the story continued, "Paul Parker of Salinas bared all the scandal (we hope it was all) 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 the sod, Parker's tragedies raised ripples of laughter without standing any hair on end. One guesses these conditions were recalled from the times when he first heard some of the tales from his father.

Stories of early Indians of the coast country and hills preceded the more exciting thrillers. Their 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 early eat dead seals and whales washed ashore.

"Should Salinas miss her distinguished historian someday he may be found at Fort Savannah, digging for a copper box. He is on the scent of one buried in 1848 by soldiers of the U.S. Army.

"Other speakers at the dinner referred briefly to historic topics, Laura Bride Powers spoke of the significance of the date, April 14, in recent Spanish history and ancient California events.

"Carmel Martin spoke of interest the association might show toward celebrating the 150th anniversary of Father Serra's death.

"Miss Effie Fortune, chairman of the art committee, told of a plan to bring more and more work of local artists before the pupils of the high school and thanked Luis Mora for his generosity in talking to young people and inviting them to his studio.

"Louis Slevin had a large collection of photographs of Monterey adobes taken before and after alterations, the two groups dating about 1902 and 1932. Slevin sees atmospheric deterioration in each rejuvenation.

"Col. Fitch, presiding as president of the association, had many items of interest to pass on to the members among them an announcement that money had been donated to place permanent markers at more than twenty historical spots around the peninsula.

"Gordon Knoles pleased his audience with two solos for which Mrs. Knoles played his accompaniments. '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 wildflowers that decorated the tables."