

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 5, 1967

Story of Old Cannon

One day in the spring of 1948 I answered the telephone to hear the voice of Mrs. Grant Stevenson asking me if the Monterey History and Art Association would accept a gift of an ancient bronze cannon presumably of Spanish origin. Of course, I could not say, "yes" fast enough, sight unseen.

Mrs. Stevenson told me this fascinating story over the telephone and then added more information when the late Mrs. Mary L. Green, long-time curator of the old Custom House, and I arrived at Heather Hedge in Pebble Beach. She said that her father and Lt. Cmdr. Grant Stevenson, assisted by the family dog, were cleaning out a spring in the garden when they discovered and dug out this beautiful bronze cannon. That was in 1933. It was an admired decoration in their garden until 1948.

In 1948, Mrs. Green and I drove to the Stevenson home in Pebble Beach, saw the cannon and appreciated its value both in beauty and history. We decided that surely some Spanish galleon had once anchored in Stillwater Cove. In want of fresh water its crew had followed a trickle up the hill and found the spring, taking the cannon for protection against possible attack. After talking it over they must have decided to bury the heavy cannon there rather than carry it back to the ship and it could be picked up again as they returned from further adventure. But the cannon waited for years underground until discovered by Americans living in Pebble Beach.

With help the cannon was put into my car and delivered to the Custom House where it now rests on a redwood pedestal, greatly admired by all who visit this national monument.

A few days after the cannon was installed in its final resting place, Myron Oliver went across the street from the old Oliver store (no longer standing), with a mysterious wrapped package in his arms and greeting Mrs. Green in his usual friendly manner, he said: "A surprise. What do you think; the cannon has had a baby", and with that introduction he presented a little bronze cannon, an exact copy of the larger one. It is now in a case in the Custom House, always looking in admiration at its parent.

A picture of the larger cannon appeared in The Herald a week or so ago. Both cannons belong to the Monterey History and Art Association and are on loan to the Custom House Museum.