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Researcher to Share Secrets of Hotel Del Monte Garden Designs

A garden design and "signature piece" by one of the world's leading 19th Century landscape artists provides an enduring, captivating landmark on the Monterey Peninsula, says a researcher from the University of California at Berkeley.

Julie Cain, avid gardener and historian, will discuss her latest findings about the development of the Hotel Del Monte gardens, created in the 1880's by Rudolf Ulrich, during an open house program Memorial Day, May 28 at the Naval Postgraduate School.

Shortly after railroad pioneer Charles Crocker built the Hotel Del Monte in 1880 "there was an explosion of interest in horticulture, fueled by the creation of important botanical collections," Cain said. Crocker hired Ulrich, who was considered "one of the best-trained men of his day," to develop the grounds at Del Monte.

Ulrich's designs emphasized plant texture and color, Cain said, and "his plant palette included imported tropicals and evergreens, extensive mosaiculture, fountains, urns, statuary, and his signature Arizona Garden, with cacti planted in formal beds surrounded by rock or shells. He took advantage of the ability to grow plants out of doors that in the Eastern U.S. or Europe needed to be grown under glass."

The grounds at Del Monte provided a "perfect blend of rural elegance and formal design" in which Ulrich established a "contemporary conception of California as a state of paradise, a place of unlimited possibilities, and a potential for a rich life," she said. "You couldn't see anything like this anywhere else" and the railroad promoted the grounds as a way to lure adventurous travelers to Monterey.

Cain's presentation is richly illustrated with rare archival photographs and recently discovered documents. Her talks will be given in the La Novia Room from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m.

-Del Monte-

