

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

December 2, 1949

In yesterdays column we discussed the life of California Pioneer omen and today there has come with the mail a booklet of a reprint from the Historical Society of Southern California's Quarterly entitled "Great Women of California," by Rockwell D. Hunt. Dr. Hunt is a member of the faculty of the College of the Pacific at Stockton, where he teaches history and political science. Twice within the past year Dr. Hunt has journeyed to Monterey to speak before members of the History and Art Association and guests of the museum in Colton Hall.

Dr. Hunt is the author of several books and a student of the history of California. In 1895 he received a degree from Johns Hopkins University, using as his thesis subject "The Genesis of California's First Constitution (1846-1849)." During one of his visits to Monterey Dr. Hunt presented an original and autographed copy of that thesis to the Monterey History and Art Association.

"Great Women of California" is illustrated with photographs from the author's collection and includes likenesses of Annie K. Bidwell, Caroline S. Severance, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Jessie Benton Fremont and Sarah B. Cooper.

Quoting from the booklet, Dr. Hunt writes: "The first lady of rank and social standing to enter the province of Alta California was Dona Eulalia de Callis, the wife of Spanish Governor Pedro Fages, who reached Monterey headquarters in early 1783. The sad romance of Concepcion Arguello, daughter of the commandante of San Francisco, will always live in the verse of Bret Harte and the prose of Gertrude Atherton. Of one thing I may be sure: the names presented, incomplete as the list may be, constitute in their entirety a brilliant galaxy – notable women who would lend grace and greatness to any commonwealth."

First the stars of the literary firmament are named: Helen Hunt Jackson, author of "Ramona"; Ina Donna Coolbrith, California's first "poet laureate," and the only woman ever to be elected a member of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco; Mary Austin, once a resident of Carmel and author of "The Land of Little Rain" and other novels which brought her imperishable fame; Kate Douglas Wiggin, best known probably for her "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," Gertrude Atherton, perhaps the most widely read of all California authors; and Jessie Benton Fremont, whose "Souvenir of My Time" (1887) had instant success and wide sale.

Other literary women mentioned by Dr. Hunt are Ella Sterling Mighels, Lillian Hinman Shuey, poet; Eliza A. Otis, also a poet, and Sarah Royce, whose recollections, "A Frontier Lady," have been published.

In the realm of music the historian names Emma Nevada, born in Nevada City and later known as the Queen of the Operatic Stage; Madame Ernestine Schuman-Heink; Madame Tetrzzini, Sibyl Sanderson, a native of Sacramento, who became the idol of Paris; Mary Anderson, born in Sacramento in 1859, actress; and Lotta Crabtree, for who Lotta's Fountain in San Francisco is named.

Dr. Hunt calls the next group of California women social reformers and leaders in education and names: Madame Caroline Seymore Severance, peerless advocate for rights of women and mother of women's clubs in Los Angeles, first; Sarah Brown Cooper, a resident of San Francisco, director of Associated Charities and once president of the Women's Press Association; Jessie Blanche Peixotto, professor of social economics at the University of California; Mary Simons Gibson, a zealous worker for social uplift; and Clara Bradley Burdette, who played an important part in the cultural history of Southern California.

The last group named includes a trio of illustrious women whose names must forever be associated with the development of California, for whom all Californians of succeeding generations must be deeply grateful. First is Jane Stanford, founder of Stanford University; Phoebe Apperson Hearst, one of the founders of the Parent-Teacher Association and a benefactor in the development of the University of California. And, last of all, Dr. Hunt names "Annie Kennedy Bidwell – one of the noblest of them all," Mrs. Bidwell, distinguished pioneer of 1841. "She earnestly advocated prohibition, equal suffrage for women and was a charter member of the Daughters of the American Revolution – a true California noblewomen."

Mr. and Mrs. Francisco Ferro have had as their recent guests in their Carmel home Mrs. Ferro's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Grabhorn of San Francisco, and their daughter. Mr. Grabhorn is the owner of the Grabhorn Press in San Francisco, which is noted for its vey artistic and unusual printing. It has been said that any article, whether card or book length, if printed by Grabhorn at once becomes a collector's item. Other members of the family enjoying a recent holiday in Carmel were Mrs. Ferro's brother, Dr. John Robertson, Mrs. Robertson and their son and daughter of Livermore, California. Dr. and Mrs. Robertson have a home in Carmel where they often spend some time.