

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Bootlegged Books in the 1880s

The gift of the books and other historical items from the library of Don Juan B. Alvarado, first governor of California, by his grandson, John B. Alvarado of Sa

In "California Pastoral" by Hubert Howe Bancroft, published in 1888, and comprising the history of California between 1769 and 1848, there is a very interesting article on the early school libraries, and the educational system of the Californians.

Of Governor Alvarado, Bancroft writes: "Nor was Alvarado himself one of a handful of native Californians who in spite of all obstacles had acquired some little education, a whit more successful in his persistent endeavor to advance the cause of learning. His first message to the so-called Congress of California urged the necessity of public instruction and he made other appeals to the same effect.

"During the early years of the missions they were furnished with certain approved religious and historical works. But the Inquisition in Spain prohibited the introduction into California of any but a certain stripe of books, and watch was kept on the luggage of the few foreigners who visited the country."

The Boston skippers and supercargoes indulged in little ventures of their own, which did not appear on the ship's manifest—among other things a few books which they bartered for hides and tallow to two or three Californians thirst for knowledge. The friars were vigilant, however, and not infrequently detected the illicit traffic. They then condemned the volumes, in all the soberness of medieval times, to be burned in the marketplace.

There were in 1846 three or four libraries in California, other than those of the missions, being M.G. Vallejo's at Sonoma, Hartnell's in Monterey, which cost him a good sum, and from which he readily lent to his friends, Francisco Pacheco's collection was worthy of notice, according to Bancroft, consisting as it did of periodicos empastados, and books on Mexican history. Captain de la Guerra at Santa Barbara, had a choice collection of scientific and religious books. None of these books remained long in the original owners' possession; Vallejo's was burned, Hartnell's divided among his

descendants, Pacheco's went into the possession of his brother-in-law, Mariano Malarin, of Santa Clara, and de la Guerra's was probably scattered among his sons and their descendants.

"About 1831 on board the Mexican vessel 'Leonor' was a large collection of books of the class interdicted by the church," Bancroft writes. "They were the property of the German merchant Virmond, and were not on the ships manifest. A spiteful or fanatical sailor reported the matter to the padres at San Francisco. Vallejo then in command, went on board, warned Virmond and Fitch, the commander, and offered to buy the books, which were sold to him for 400 hides and 10 skins of tallow. This was the best library in California up to this time. By 5 o'clock the next morning the books were safely in the purchaser's house. Jose Castro and Juan B. Alvarado took some of the books to Monterey to read."

As amusing old book is the issue of Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms, or a Correct Guide to Correct Writing, showing how to express written thought plainly rapidly, elegantly and correctly in social and business life; which has been presented to the History and Art Association by Ethel O. Egleston of Berkeley.

The editor of his book tells on the fly leaf that the contents embraces instruction and examples of penmanship, spelling, use of capital letters, writing for press, epistolary correspondence, family records, duties of a secretary, epitaphs, writing poetry and love letters, etc. The book was written by Thomas E. Hill in 1875.

Another gift to the Association now hanging in the Stevenson House, is a very old Dutch wall clock, presented by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hill Gilbert.

Very primitive in design, it is hanging in the upstairs west room of the historic adobe. Mrs. William Kneass the curator, has recently been informed by one who should know, that this room was formerly a game room in the days when the house was a hotel. It contained a large billiard table and other entertainment features.

An ivory satin wedding dress which dates back to a wedding which occurred more than 100 years ago, has been received by the History and Art Association from the late Mrs. Mary Arnold Shanklin Daggett of Carmel. Her husband, Eliott Daggett and her daughter, Mrs. Stanley Corrsin of Baltimore, Maryland, have made the presentation. The dress which was worn by Mrs. Daggett's great, great grandmother, will be shown in

one of the cases in the new Green Room at the First Theater very soon. Restoration work on this room in the old Swan Adobe has been going on for several weeks, in fact, since Mrs. Lester Hartigan, the curator, moved into the new home which the State of California, custodians of the theater, has built for her at the rear of the theater property.

At the November meeting of the Monterey History and Art Association Mrs. Houghton Roberts, a director, presented to the association, the deed, written in long hand, and partly in Spanish, to a certain tract of land conveyed to John Meyers by one Jose Abrego by deed dated February 22, 1871. Said tract of land was a portion of the Rancho Noche Buena, which contained at that time a little less than one square league of land. Patent for the Rancho Noche Buena was issued and signed by President Abraham Lincoln, Oct. 7, 1862. The claim of said patent was founded on a Mexican grant to Don Juan Antonio Munos made on the 20th day of November, 1835 by Jose Castro, then governor of California.