

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Early Country Doctor

When we reported a few days ago the talk which Dr. Garth Parker made on the early hospital and medical profession in Monterey County, we did not go into details on the lives of any one of the early doctors in particular, so today we would like to tell the readers something about the life of one, Dr. Samuel Milton Archer, whose daughters and other members of the family are living in various parts of the county.

In a souvenir edition of "Monterey County, Resources, History and Biography," published by E.S. Harrison, there is this account of his life and work:

Dr. S.M. Archer is not only an eminent physician and genial gentleman, but one of the landmarks of Monterey County, having resided here since 1869. He came to California in 1866 from Louisville, Kentucky. He comes from a long line of American ancestors, the first of whom were early colonial settlers in Virginia and Maryland. At a later date members of the family participated in the wars of the Revolution, and 1812, and in the early Indian wars, many of them filling important positions in the Army and the government.

Among Dr. Archer's ancestors is John Archer, of Maryland, who was the first man to graduate in medicine in the United States. He obtained his diploma from the Philadelphia Medical College in 1768. The subject of this sketch received his education at the Indiana Asbury University, and graduated in medicine at Louisville. He then attended the clinics at the Bellevue and Blackwell Island Hospitals, New York, for a considerable time.

After arriving in San Francisco in 1866, as a matter of adventure, and with a desire to see more of the world, he made a trip to China via the Sandwich Islands and Japan, as a surgeon on the boat. The passage was rough both ways, dangerous and disagreeable, and when the young medico got back to San Francisco he concluded that he had had enough of "life on the ocean wave". He determined to locate in the country and so arrived in this county, intending to return to the city in a few years to locate. But he soon became a fixture in Monterey County, although he was often called to San Francisco professionally.

In 1872 he was appointed county physician, and took charge of the County Hospital, which buildings he had built and sold to the county. In his lifetime he had perhaps treated, successfully, more desperate cases of dropsy than any other physician in the state. He served one term as coroner, and public administrator, from 1876 to 1878, but declined renomination, and also declined the nomination for Assembly in 1886.

Dr. Archer married Luisa Robertson and to them were born seven daughters, four of whom are still living: Mrs. Luisa Dahlgren and Mrs. Mary Davis, who reside up the Carmel Valley; Mrs. Agnes Meline of San Francisco and Mrs. Sallie Zane, wife of Colonel E.L. Zane of Pebble Beach.

Dr. Archer's office was in the Scott building over the drug store of that name on the main street in Salinas in the early days. Dr. Archer passed away in 1902 and was buried in Salinas with great honors.

The California Historical Society will meet Saturday, April 15th at 12:30 p.m. for luncheon at the Eaglet Theatre in Sacramento. Luncheon will be followed by a performance given by the members of the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre similar to those presented at the opening of the theatre last fall, during its centennial play festival.

During the centennial years the society is holding several out-of-town meetings to honor cities and towns within the state and to permit members living away from San Francisco to participate more actively in the gatherings.

The Eagle Theatre, housed in the first building built for a theatre in California, opened October 18, 1849, with "Bandit Chief" as the attraction. Its offspring the "Eaglet", was dedicated one hundred years after to the day, and it is in the latter building that the society's meeting will be held. Monterey's First Theatre has the honor of having housed the first theatrical performance but the building itself was not built for a theatre but for a sailors' rooming house

Miss Caroline Wenzel of the California Room at the State Library, Carroll D. Hall of Sutter's Fort and Dr. Frederick Vickery of the E.B. Crocker Art Gallery have issued special invitations to members to visit their respective collections in the morning prior to the luncheon. Each of these institutions has much of interest for Californians, and visitors are urged to take advantage of the opportunity of viewing their treasures.

Mrs. Edna Martin Parratt, who owns a home at Carmel Highlands and is a new member of the Monterey History and Art Association, is the managing director of the California Historical Society museum and gallery at 456 McAllister Street in San Francisco. A large number of Monterey Peninsula residents are also contributing members, as is the Monterey History and Art Association.