

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Early Visitors to Library**

The Friends of the Bancroft Library at the University of California have recently begun the publication of a leaflet "Bancroftiana" which will be issued to the Friends occasionally to inform them of what is going on at the library.

In the second issue which came to my desk a few days ago there appeared an article entitled "Book of Visitors." It tells of the many and noted visitors who called at the Bancroft library when it was Mr. Bancroft's private collection in his San Francisco home.

Ann Bancroft came into the library at the university a short time ago, so the article related, bringing as a present the old guest book kept by her grandfather. On the first page is the heading, "Visitors to the Bancroft Library." The first entry, dated January 24, 1876, is "Juan B. Alvarado, San Pablo." It was certainly no accident that Governor Alvarado was so honored by that first place. For several years Hubert Howe Bancroft and his friends had used their wiles to overcome the governor's hatred of the "Gringos" and persuade him to contribute his valuable reminiscences to the library. At last, in 1875, he began to dictate the five-volume "Historia de California," now one of the Bancroft treasures.

The evidence from the guest book substantiates previous conjectures that visitors to Mr. Bancroft's library of Pacific Coast history came from many parts of the world. The registered San Franciscans include: Col. Warren, "editor of California Farmer"; E.J. Molera, Stephen J. Field, both of Monterey; Hall McAllister, Horatio Stebbins, William Ingraham Kip, J.L. Flood, Arthur McEwen, George Davidson, Mrs. Peter Donahue, and many more ladies, and even a whole normal school class.

Intermingled with these are the signatures of those coming from some distance, such as M.G. Vallejo, Lachryma Montis, Jacob P. Leese, Monterey; Harrison Gray Otis, Santa Barbara; Phineas Banning, Wilmington; J.E. Doolittle, Volcano; Josiah Royce, Cambridge, Mass.; James G. Fair, Virginia City; F. McClatchy, Sacramento; and Bernard Moses, Berkeley.

"Well, the entries stop with the year 1892 and there are many pages left empty. It has been decided to put the

book back into active service, and after more than half a century, to use it once more as a guest book on the Bancroft Library. Please be advised, Friends, that signing this book obligates you just as it did Governor Alvarado in 1876, to give your efforts to the continued growth of the collections of Californiana," according to the closing lines in the second edition of Bancroftiana.

Two years ago the Bancroft Library embarked upon the work of transcribing the nine volumes of manuscripts in the Larkin collection. These contain the letters and papers of Thomas Oliver Larkin – more than 4,000 individual items. Until now the only guide to these manuscripts has been the references of Hubert Howe Bancroft. It was felt that publication, making this valuable material accessible to scholars, would be a significant contribution.

The collection is of primary importance as a source of historical information for California in its formative years. Larkin was the first and only American Consul to Monterey and was the builder of the Larkin House now the home of his granddaughter, Mrs. Harry Toulmin.

Now, with the last volume well under way, editorial work on the Larkin papers turns into the home stretch. While no date has been set for publication, and while considerable work remains to be done in the way of checking, proofreading, and indexing, the end is at least in sight, say the editors of Bancroftiana.

Other reports made in Bancroftiana which concern the history of Monterey are:

"With the past few weeks a Castro collection has begun to take shape, as well as an additional group of Larkin manuscripts, consisting mainly of commercial correspondence. We now have likely-looking nuclei of Spear and Hartnell collections. Letters and accounts of William A. Leidesdorff, Jacob Leese, and others are being classified."