

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 11, 1950

A Batch of Letters

Alexander H. Taylor was the first bibliographer of California. He came to Monterey in 1848 and resided here until some time in 1860. In his peculiar way Alexander H. Taylor was a collector of historical material, and in this perhaps, we are most greatly indebted to him.

While in Monterey he had acquired a large collection of Spanish documents relating to the history of California from 1720 to 1846, among which were some 40 or 50 letters written by Padre Junipero Serra. There were 6,000 documents in this collection, 800 of which were dated before 1800, and 4,500 before 1840. The collection was offered by Taylor to Congress. In his memorial dated March 30th, 1854, he stated that he required no remuneration. All that he petitioned was that Congress permit the publication of them under his supervision. They were "documents and papers of public character consisting of letters from the authorities, religious, civil and military; Viceroyalty and Republic of Mexico; proclamations from governors; letters and reports of priests, establishment of missions; Indians; Pious Fund; and lands, public and private."

Congresses before and since have been supremely indifferent, and the Congress of 1854 evidently believed that consistency is a jewel, according to a report published in the Quarterly of the California Historical Society. On May 17, 1854, the memorial was referred to the Committee on Public Lands and ordered to be printed. Like the memory of that Congress, both have long slumbered in peaceful oblivion. After vainly waiting for three years, Taylor presented the collection to the Archbishop of the Catholic church in California and in the diocesan residence in San Francisco they are yet extant – a priceless collection.

Another collection of great historical value was a gathering of about 400 specimen newspapers printed in California from 1846-1854. As many of these were short-lived some of them would now be quite unique. With these also were several proclamations printed on the Monterey Spanish press between 1834 and 1844. This collection was presented to the Mercantile library of San Francisco, which with its entire collection, was lost forever in the fire of 1906. The personal library of

Alexander H. Taylor, a small collection, was sold by him to the University of California about 1871 or 1872.

Alexander H. Taylor came to California with the earliest motley and variegated band of adventurers – though never of it – at the time of the discovery of gold at Coloma. He was born in Charleston, S.C., on April 16, 1817. He came to California from Hong Kong in the brig Pacific, landing at Monterey on September 8, 1848. From 1849 until 1860 he resided in Monterey, where for a few years he was clerk of the United States District Court. In 1860 he removed to Santa Barbara, where he lived until his death. He married a daughter of Daniel Hill, an early and prominent American settler, whose wife was Rafaela Olivera de Ortega. The Taylors were married in 1860 at Santa Barbara Mission, and "La Patera," a part of Hill's Ranch, was his wife's portion.

Interested visitors of the Stevenson House a few days ago were Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Pascoe of Los Angeles. Mr. Pascoe is the great-grandson of Don Juan Girardin and Dona Manuela Girardin, the owners of the Stevenson House in the days when Robert Louis Stevenson was residing there. He is also the grandson of Valentine Gigling, for whom the Gigling reservation, now Fort Ord, was named.

Dr. and Mrs. Raoul H. Blanquie, with Mrs. Blanquie's parents, were visitors this week at the Stevenson House, the Custom House and other historic spots in Monterey. Dr. Blanquie is one of the moving spirits in the French Society in San Francisco and during his visit in Monterey he was interested in looking for material for an art and historical exhibit to be given in the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco in November. The exhibit will exemplify the influence of the French in California up to 1880.

More than a hundred visitors have walked over the doorstep of the Gutierrez Adobe since it has been open each afternoon this past week. There have been visitors from Chicago, Seattle, Springfield, Mass., San Francisco, Portland, River Forest, Ill., and many interested persons from the Peninsula. In the guest book have been written such remarks as: "Very Nice," "Preserve as a Landmark," "Wonderful," "Very interesting" and "Lovely."