

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Wanted: Pioneers**

The origin of the California Historical Society has been lost in the mists of time according to the report of Mrs. Edna Martin Parratt, the managing director. But it is recorded that on April 29, 1852, the Historical Society of the State of California was incorporated in San Francisco under the board of directors consisting of Stephen J. Field, J.B. Moore, H.W. Halleck, R. Greenhow, J.G. Marvin, Alexander H. Taylor, P.B. Reading, Pablo de la Guerra and William J. Shaw, "sterling historical names all" – but no record of the incorporation papers can be found in Sacramento. Several of the above named gentlemen were closely associated with Monterey in the early days.

The California Historical Society was incorporated under the leadership of John T. Doyle on July 14, 1870, with a membership of twenty-five, among whom were numbered John W. Dwinelle, Tiburcio Parrott and Joseph A. Donahue. During this period in its history the society published Father Palou's "Noticias de la Nueva California" in an edition now rare, of one hundred copies, and the "Reglamento para el Gobierno de la Provincia de Californias" in an edition of 150 copies.

After a few years of little activity the society was absorbed into a new body which was incorporated on March 6, 1886, with the impetus supplied by Donahue, Doyle, Edward H Golden and Bernard Moses, supported by several other enthusiasts.

The second society succeeded in publishing a series of papers in three volumes and a Memorial Address which had been delivered by Theodore H. Hittell, noted historian, upon the services of George Bancroft to California. This group also lapsed into inactivity early in the nineties.

The society was again revived by the late Templeton Crocker and Henry R. Wagner and since that time it has grown from a membership of less than 60 in 1922 to a state-wide organization numbering well over 1800 members residing largely within California, but having scattered representation throughout the world.

The California Historical Society publishes a Quarterly, Special Publications and pamphlets which are sought by libraries, collectors, students and amateurs. The library, museum and gallery on McAllister Street in San

Francisco supplies information and illustrations throughout the country, and it gives evidence of continuing in growth an activity.

"This Sudden Empire" is the story of the growth, organization and development of the Society of California Pioneers which celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday last year, along with the state itself. The book was printed by Taylor & Taylor in San Francisco, in observance of the anniversary.

It is an interesting story as to how the pioneers happened to come into being. When Zachary Taylor died, it was James C.L. Wadsworth who suggested to a group of friends that they take part in the procession in a separate body as "the pioneers." By inserting a notice in the papers, the nucleus-group got together quite a sizeable number, including Sam Brannan himself on horseback – and so the society was formed. Within two months it was a growing organization, with officers elected and a fine banner of its own to use on future patriotic occasions.

The Society has had its ups and downs throughout the years, it has weathered financial panics, fires, and other disasters, devoting itself to pioneer interests at first and then more broadly to the collection and care of historical material relating to the state.

It was James Lick, philanthropist and eccentric, who made the Society the recipient of important gifts, and enabled the organization to do much that less fortunate groups would have found it impossible to do.

The Society has been helpful to hundreds of writers and students whose interest in their state's past is genuine, and out of its archives, its historical records and its library, not to mention the unique treasures that are in the possession of the society have come many books of history and commentary on the California scene.

Miss Ruth Teiser is the author of the book, "This Sudden Empire." Edward David Kell, the society's president, has written the introduction. The title page and chapter heads are decorated with woodcuts in two colors by Mallette Dean.