

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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San Francisco ... a Small Town Rising Rapidly in Importance

If one is a bit sentimental – or perhaps it is appreciation of old type and old binding – it is a pleasure to pick up and enjoy an old book. Such was the case when we turned the pages of “The Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste” edited by A.J. Downing and published by Joseph Breck and Co. in Boston July, 1849 to 1850.

The article which interested us most because of its reference to Monterey, is entitled “A Botanical Account of California.” The editors give credit to the Journal of the Horticultural Society of London. It was written by Mr. Hartwig, a botanical collector, employed by the Society to explore Mexico and the coast of the Pacific. His journey to California took place in 1848, and “he wandered through the Valley of the Sacramento without a dream of the wonderful changes which a couple of years would make in the destiny and appearance of that country.”

The editors' note expresses the hope that “some of our California adventurers, returning home, will bring pockets full of seeds of the beautiful California horse chestnut and the evergreen oak, described by Mr. H., that a trial may be made of their fitness for adorning pleasure grounds in England.”

Hartwig left Mazatlan on the 11th of May, and arrived at Monterey on the 7th of June, after a passage of 26 days. He wrote back to England that the verdant fields and pine-covered range of Mountains at the back of the town form a pleasing contrast to the dried-up vegetation about Mazatlan. The predominating trees were the recorded, the evergreen oak (*Quercus californica*) forming a tree 30 feet high, with globular crown, and having branches much distorted.

Hartwig goes on to relate that the late Dr. Coulter (1845) collected seeds of pines “near the seashore of Monterey; that locality, no doubt being Point Pinos, as it is the only habitat near Monterey where pines grow close to the beach; it is at the same time the place where I (Hartwig) made other observations concerning the various pines.” He also noted that it takes the cones from 18 to 24 months to ripen.

On the dry banks of the ravines this English botanist saw, to the northeast of Monterey, the California horse chestnut (*Pavia californica*). He described it as being extremely ornamental and on one, which he counted, there were 400 open flowers and buds. He continues with a list of shrubs, annuals, perennials and bulbs, paying particular homage to the *Ceanothus* which he found very common in the pine woods.

On June 22, 1846, Hartwig left Monterey for the mission at Santa Cruz. “Passing along the shore over the plains, which present the same vegetation as about Monterey, we arrived in the afternoon at the mission, after a gallop of seven hours, wrote the botanist to his friends in England.

Returning to Monterey on July 2, Hartwig made another excursion to the Rancho de Tularcitos. Following up the narrow valley of the Carmel River, he writes that he entered a beautiful wood of alders, willows and plane trees, some of the later attaining a height of 80 feet, and 12 in circumference.

On August 23, Hartwig embarked on board the bark *Joven Guipuzcoana*, whose owner, Don Jose Antonio Aguirre, invited him to take a trip up to the bay of San Francisco. About noon of August 28, they “anchored off Yerba Buena (San Francisco), a small town, rising rapidly in importance.”

During his visit in the north they were joined by General Vallejo, Hartwig relates, and proceeded to the Mission San Rafael. After enjoying the “hospitable board of the general for three days, Hartwig left his companions and returned to Monterey to find that the rainy season had set in. “El Tora,” he wrote, “which lies due east of Monterey, has already been twice covered with snow, but it soon disappeared again.”