

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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California Imports

California was not an ordinary frontier at the time of the gold rush, writes Hugh Sanford Cheney Baker in his "History of the Book Trade in California." It had been partially occupied by Spanish, other European, and American settlers who had funded missions and towns, established trade and agriculture, and subdued many of the Indians. Settlers in San Diego, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Monterey, and San Francisco already had urban tastes; they desired, and were able to obtain, fine clothing, paintings, and musical instruments. After the middle of 1849, the pace of actual urbanization became so quickened that these luxuries could be purchased in special as well as general stores in Sacramento, Marysville and Stockton and in the large mining towns.

Among the necessities and luxuries imported into California were books. The settlers on their part were enabled by the book trade to keep abreast of current ideas; they could read not only standard works, but the newest library creations, also within a few months after publication on the other side of the continent or in Europe.

Aside from the Thomas Oliver Larkin Library and that of W.E.P. Hartnell in Monterey, there were citizens of lesser prominence who collected books in Monterey in the early 1840s.

Both Larkin and Hartnell libraries were considered among the best and most extensive in the state. Hartnell procured many of his most valuable and worthwhile volumes from his father-in-law, Jose de la Guerra of Santa Barbara and they were continuously borrowing books from each other during their lifetime.

There were in 1846 three or four libraries in California, according to Bancroft, others being M.G. Vallejo's at Sonoma and Francisco Pacheco's collection was worthy of notice, consisting as it did of "periodicos empastados" and books on Mexican history. De la Guerra's had a scientific and religious flavor. None of these libraries remained long in the original owner's possession, Vallejo's were burned, and Hartnell's were divided among his sons and descendants. The Monterey History and Art Association has been most fortunate in procuring a goodly number of these old books from the families who owned them, and thus Monterey as a

whole is enriched by their presence here. Almost 100 small leather bound volumes from the library of Escolastica Rodrigues de Dye are now at the Custom House, procured by the Association from the estate of her daughter Martha Bolton. Mrs. Ann Burk of Ben Lomond give a large collection of books pertaining to early California in memory of her son, Francis.

Most of the books in the Dye collection were printed in the Spanish language before 1840, the oldest being published in Madrid in 1821 and entitled "Posieas de el Dr. Juan Melendez Valdes" in three volumes. Others in the collection were printed in Paris, Valencia, Barcelona, and Valpariso. The latest publication date noted is 1856.

Two of the most interesting volumes in the collection are "Album Mexican and America Poetica" and "Calendario (calendar) de las Senioritas Megicanas, 1839" The first named book is a collection of articles from a magazine published in Mexico City in 1846, including stories, poetry and various information

The series of colored plates form "Flowers Personified" (translated from the French language) are very beautiful and were evidently the same as used for the illustrations contained in a volume by the same name "Les Fleurs Animees." Translated from the French by M. Cleaveland and published in New York by R. Martin of 48 Ann Street in 1849. This book is in the possession of Mrs. Andrew Stewart of Carmel Valley.

The Album Mexicano bears the name Escolastica Rodrigues de Dye and the date Dec. 25, 1851. Mrs. Martha Bolton always told her friends that the book had been a gift to her mother from Commodore Sloat.

These books and the other valuable and historic items in the old Custom House are what draws the residents and tourists to this building each and every day in the week.

On Sunday of the past week, there were 1,180 visitors to the building. The writer heard many works of praise for the building and other old buildings in Monterey, for the exhibits contained therein, and heard several requests for the maps of the historic route. The Chamber of Commerce has not yet replenished the supply. The new maps will feature the route as illustrated in the recently printed "Monterey, the Doorway to History," as issued by the Monterey Foundation.