

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **He Rings the Mission Bells**

Many times in the past the Diary has referred to the works of Father Zephyrin Englehardt when writing of the Missions of California and the founder. Today we have been asked to publish the fact that several of his books—such of them as remain in print—are now on sale. Rosario Andrea Curletti of Santa Barbara is handling the sale. From the proceeds of the sale of these historical volumes, a work currently in progress, a biography of Father Junipero Serra, will be written.

Assigned to write the life of Serra is Father Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., the successor of Father Englehardt, who is now at Palma, Mallorca, for the great festival on July 21. Father Serra was born in Mallorca and, as we have written in the past, his birthplace in Petra, on that island was restored by the San Francisco Rotary Club and presented to the City of San Francisco through the California Historical Society.

Father Geiger has been given a leave of absence from his duties as archivist and historian at Santa Barbara Mission. He has already accomplished the task of compiling and arranging the Serra documents, in preparation for Father Serra's canonization candidacy. Dr. Herbert Bolton of the University of California Library had a part in preparing the papers. Dr. Bolton is a great admirer of the founder of the California Missions.

Rosario Curletti is sure that many collectors will wish to procure copies of Father Englehardt's books and thus financially help with the publication of the new biography of Father Serra. His address is 1715 Garden Street, Santa Barbara, California. He will be happy to answer any inquiries regarding the books.

Mr. Curletti announced that there are a few copies left of the Spanish translation of "The Holy Man of Santa Clara," ("Un Missonero Santo.") It is interesting that our correspondent relates that this little book was not greatly sold because in shipping the copies from Spain they became slightly water-stained. The binding is wine red cloth, lettered in gold.

Volumes I and II of "Missions and Missionaries of California," are available, all in second editions. Volume I is devoted to Baja, California. The index for this three-volume work is also available, some in cloth and some in paper bindings.

Of the local histories, Mr. Curletti writes, there are copies available in only four. Ed Berein of Santa Barbara, well known Western artist, designed the gilded covers stamped on brown cloth. The four are: Mission Dolores; Mission San Juan Capistrano; Mission San Juan Bautista; Mission San Buenaventura. In paper binding there are available: Mission Soledad, Mission Purisima and Mission San Juan Batista.

In a recent issue of the Central California Register there was an informative article concerning the method and significance of the ringing of the Mission bells. In San Luis Obispo there is an aged bell ringer, Gregory Silverio, who has been ringing the bells in the mission there for 60 years. He declares that the bells have their secret and sacred language, sending forth unique and differing tones and rhythms for each occasion, and only a few men have known how to utter their changing voice. Gregory Silverio is the last of them.

For a death he tolls the De Profundis the left hand managing the joyful and glorious bells, these in the left and center arches, the right alternates these twice with the 10 sweet strokes of the sorrowful bell in the right arch of the mission. For 60 years he rang the joyous bells for all the weddings—except his own—at the Mission in San Luis Obispo. At that time there was no one else who knew the art of bell ringing to perform that duty for Silverio.

Articles in magazines and newspapers have said that Silverio is a sensitive master of the all-but-lost art of conveying the deep and sensitive messages through great-toned bells. The mission became his home in 1890 and there he learned how to ring the bells from an old Indian named Florentino Naja, who died at the age of 93. Naja knew how to ring the bells the Franciscan way, having been taught by the Franciscan Fathers.