

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Blue Boy and Pinkie In Pasadena

Henry E. Huntington has been called the world's foremost collector of rare books. The Huntington Library at Pasadena in California is known the world over for its rare and valuable books and its collection of art treasures which is almost beyond valuation. The library is the source material for many of the great books which have been written about the West Coast, and many books, pamphlets, letters, maps and other historical materials would have passed into the unknown was it not for the continual vigilance of the staff employed there.

With the passing of Collis P. Huntington of Central Pacific railroad fame in 1900, his nephew, Henry E. Huntington, found himself in possession of some \$30,000,000 to do with as he desired. Dr. Rockwell Hunt, director of the California Historical Foundation at the College of the Pacific writes: "What he did with his vast wealth and his later accumulations proved to be of the widest public interest and earned for the possessor the title of benefactor to his commonwealth. His extraordinary gift to the public merits for him a rank second only to Andrew Carnegie or John D Rockefeller.

Henry E. Huntington was born in Oneonta, N.Y., Feb. 27, 1850, the fourth in a family of seven children of Solon and Harriett Huntington, according to the Columbia Encyclopedia. The family ancestors had come from England to the colonies in 1633. Collis Huntington was once a partner in the merchandise business with Solon but the lure of gold in California brought him here in 1849, and he entered the hardware business with Mark Hopkins in Sacramento. Still later they both became members of the "Big Four" of the Central Pacific Railroad Company.

His uncle encouraged Henry E. Huntington to learn the railroad business and took him to West Virginia "to inspect the eastern railway system he was then developing"

After superintending of construction jobs, managing of the Kentucky Central and other eastern associations, Henry E. Huntington came to California in 1892 to share in the management of the Southern Pacific. He was thoroughly impressed with what he saw in the Golden State. When he moved his headquarters to Southern

California he saw visions of interurban lines through that territory and later developed that vast system. He became one of the greatest single land owners in California.

At the age of 60 years Mr. Huntington gradually retired as a business man and rapidly emerged as a collector. The transformation proved a happy one for the public-spirited magnate: "The tangible result was the matchless Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, one of the noblest gifts to the world of culture, located in a highly appropriate setting and ideal environment."

The botanic gardens, with the two famous features of the cycads and largest collection of cacti and succulents must not be forgotten when mention is made of the Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

Huntington's collecting for the library became increasingly absorbing and he raised his requirements to "restrict purchases to first, early and rare editions and to manuscripts." For the vellum copy of the "Gutenberg" Bible, a record price of \$50,000 was paid. Large amounts were also expended for the Church and Hoe collections.

The amazing library grew. About the year 1915 the idea of a public institution developed. In August of 1919 a trust was established and an independent institution created, to be administered by five trustees. It was a great satisfaction, so we are told, to the benefactor, to realize that his books and manuscripts were being put to use. Scholars came in increasing numbers. The library is now considered as one of the few of the world's great living institutions of its kind, unsurpassed as a center of research in its special fields. Outstanding among the paintings owned by the Huntington Art Gallery are Gainsborough's "The Blue Boy," Sir Thomas Lawrence's "Pinkie," Sir Joshua Reynolds' "Sarah Siddons," with choice works by Romney, Hogarth, Turner, Constable and others. Tapestries, sculpture, porcelain, and special furniture, are also included in the exhibits.

In 1873 Huntington married Mary Alice Prentice of Sacramento and four children were born to them. In 1913 he married the second time, taking as his wife Arabella D. Huntington, the widow of his uncle, Collis P Huntington. On the 23 of May in 1927, Henry E. Huntington died in Philadelphia, following a surgical operation.

When he was approached concerning the writing of his autobiography, Huntington replied "No never ... this

library will tell the story. It represents the reward of all the work I have ever done and the realization of much happiness.”