

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Southern Planter

C. Purcell McCue of Greenwood, Virginia, came West the first of the year to visit his daughter, Mrs. William R. Washington, and her husband, Lt. Col. Washington in Pacific Grove. One of the several places of interest to him which he visited here was Colton Hall.

During his tour of the Convention Hall he studied the reproductions of the likenesses of the signers of the California Constitution drafted in the hall in 1849. When he came to a caption for signer Charles Tyler Botts, where the photograph was missing, he became more than interested and appealed to Mrs. Mae Hare, the curator of the Colton Hall Museum, for the reason that no likeness of the gentleman from Virginia appeared. Mrs. Hare explained that, as yet, no picture of Mr. Botts had been found. He promised that upon his return to his native state he would bend every effort to learn more of the history of Botts and obtain a photograph of the gentleman if any was in existence. A few days ago, the following letter came to Mrs. Hare at Colton Hall: "While in Colton Hall I learned that you would like to have more information about Charles Tyler Botts and his connection with the farm paper 'Southern Planter.' Being a personal friend of the present editor, on my return home I wrote him what I had seen in California."

With the note he enclosed a copy of the 100th birthday number of the Southern Planter – 1840-1940 and the following notation from P.D. Sanders, the editor: "I appreciate your thoughtfulness in writing me about Charles Tyler Botts who started The Southern Planter in 1840. Evidently he was an outstanding man; well versed in agriculture, economics, and farm machinery, and wasn't afraid to express himself politically. I sometimes wish we had more men in Virginia agriculture today with the stripe of some of those early farmers."

With the above Mr. Sanders clipped a note: "I have found an extra copy of the January 1940 number of The Southern Planter, one of twelve anniversary numbers we carried in 1940, and am sending it. References to Botts are made on pages 3, 5, 6 and 8. I am wondering if it would be possible to get a good photograph of the marker in California to Mr. Botts, as I would like to use it in The Southern Planter with an appropriate statement of the plaque."

On the first page of The Southern Planter 1940 edition, there appears a reproduction of the front page of Vol. 1, No. 1. C.T. Botts publisher, states there that the paper will be "devoted to horticulture, agriculture and the household arts. The one dollar a year is to be paid in advance. All postmasters in the union are requested to act as agents, and to remit whenever they obtain six subscribers."

In the last paragraph in the prospectus published in this first issue of The Southern Planter, Botts writes: "Of his ability to conduct such a work, it would neither avail nor become him to speak. In this, as in other cases of a similar kind, his patrons must be content to risk a year's subscription to enable them to judge. He will only assure them that he has secured the promised assistance and zealous cooperation of some of the most able and practical farmers in our state. Such was the caliber of the man who was elected a delegate to the first Constitutional Convention to be held here in California and who helped to draft the State's first Constitution."

In the first issue of The Planter, Botts addressed a statement to the reader: "To collect, examine, select from, and report to his readers in clear simple, and condensed style, all the information to which in the most untiring exertion he can gain access will be the aim and object of the editor."

Another reference to the editor of more than one hundred years ago was made on the editorial page of the anniversary number as follows: "Botts himself, was an outstanding agriculturist of his day, an inventor of farm implements, a campaigner for better living conditions on the farm, and a firm believer that agriculture is basic in the national economy." The two quotations which he placed on the masthead of the first issue, "Agriculture is the Nursing Mother of the Arts" (Xenophon) and "Tillage and Pasturage are the Two Breasts of the State" (Sully), have been carried in each succeeding issue since 1840.

Another reference to the editor who later became a Californian, reads: "Interested in the class of people which was struggling to restore, 'the exhausted fields of old Virginia,' Charles Tyler Botts in 1840 founded The Southern Planter."