

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### 'Fabricas'

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mines, of the state of California recently published a supplement to the California Journal of Mines and Geology entitled "Fabrica." It contains a collection of pictures and statements on the mineral materials used in California prior to 1850 and was assembled by Elizabeth L. Egenhoff.

Instead of being dry material as one would naturally think a book of that title would be, it is exceptionally interesting and fascinating reading. "Fabricas" is presented, so the author writes in the foreword, in answer to numerous requests for a publication on the history of the early use of building materials in California which is in large part the history of the missions; but it has been prepared chiefly as a chronicle of California's first documented mineral industry – the procuring of non-metallic mineral materials for use in construction – which ranks second only to the petroleum industry in value of production today.

Of course a greater part of the book concerns Monterey directly or indirectly. Some of the extracts are in Spanish, French, or German because English was the native language of a minority group only in the state prior to the gold rush in 1849. For all extracts in foreign languages however, English translation are appended.

The first story following an article on the construction of Carmel Mission, concerns Jean-Francois Galaup de la Perouse, on the Indian dwellings at Carmel Mission, September, 1786. Then a review of Captain George Vancouver's use of stone at Carmel Mission, 1792 to 1794. The editor included Walter Colton's description of adobe and stone construction in Monterey, 1846-1849; and William Rich Hutton's drawings of California buildings as they appeared 1847-1852.

Nine illustrations in the La Perouse article were of Carmel and Monterey churches. The reception of Perouse at Carmel Mission is from a collection of the Museo Naval, Madrid; two views of the Presidio of Monterey by Brambila, 1794, another view of the "Mision Del Carmelo de Monterey," a view of the "Rancherias de la Mision Del Carmelo" with a glimpse of the convent, church, and Indian rancherias; the Mission San Carlos, near Monterey, from a sketch taken on the

spot by J. Sykes, published May 1, 1798, by R. Edwards, New Bond street, London; the Presidio of Monterey from a sketch by the same artist and also published in London and last in the series a "Remarkable mountain near the River of Monterey," also by Sykes. The three Sykes sketches are now in the California State Library and were loaned to the Bureau of Mines by that department. The mountain looks very much as though the artist had seen the formation which some call the "Cathedral" viewed from the Los Laureles grade.

Capt. George Vancouver describes the mountain in 1794 thus: "I was ... on Wednesday able to join a party to the valley through which the "Monterey River" flows, and was gratified with the site of the most extraordinary mountain I have ever beheld. On one side it presented the appearance of a sumptuous edifice fallen into decay; the columns which looked as if they had been raised with much labor and industry, were of great magnitude, seemed to be of an elegant form, and to be composed of the same cream-colored stone, of which I have made mention before. Between these magnificent columns were deep excavations resembling different passages into the interior parts of the supposed building, whose roof being the summit of the mountain appeared to be wholly supported by these columns rising perpendicularly with the most minute mathematical exactness. The whole had the most beautiful appearance of human ingenuity and labor; but since it is not possible, from the rude and very humble race of beings that are found to be the native inhabitants of the country, to suppose they could have been capable of raising such a structure, it being the production of nature, cannot be questioned and it may not be preposterous to infer, that it has been from similar phenomena that man has received that architectural knowledge by which he has been enabled to raise those massy fabricks, which have stood for ages in all civilized countries."