

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Treasures

Several unusual and valuable gifts have come to the Monterey History and Art Association Ltd. During the past few weeks. The donors have generously asked that the gifts be accepted and placed on display in the Old Custom House, where residents and visitors to this old Pacific capital may have the privilege of seeing the personal possessions of two men who came to California before the Gold Rush and who assisted in no small manner in establishing it as a state.

From Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Pinto of Watsonville have come a handsome telescope and a very beautiful crystal wine glass, once the property of Mr. Pinto's grandfather, Don Jose Amesti of Monterey. Don Jose built Casa Amesti on Polk street, now the home of Mrs. Frances Elkins.

Born a Spanish Basque, Amesti came to Monterey on the sailing ship Panther at the age of 30 years. He became a prominent citizen and merchant, marrying Prudenciana Vallejo, the daughter of Don Ignacio Vallejo. They were the parents of four daughters, one of whom, Maria, married Pablo Pinto, the grandfather of the donor of the telescope and the wine glass. Mr. Pinto relates that his grandfather, Don Jose, used the glasses when he came from Spain to the new world in the early 1800s. The wine glass was used with a matching set in Casa Amesti when this lovely home was the center of social life in the '40s.

L.A. Harris of Spadra, California, recently called on his old friend, Carmel Martin, president of the Monterey History and Art Association, to present to the association an original copy of Walter Colton's "Three Years in California." He had inherited the book from his father but he has no knowledge of how it came into the elder Harris' possession on the flyleaf is written in Colton's own handwriting "To Jeff Davis, U.S. Senate, regards of Walter Colton, May 14 1851." The book will be placed in the library at the Custom House.

Jeff Davis became one of the Country's most distinguished statesmen. He was a graduate of West Point in 1828, married the daughter of Col. Zachary Taylor, became a member of the House of Representatives and secretary of war in 1853, but is best known as the president of the Confederacy.

The association recently acquired a beautiful old map – a rare and genuine old copper plate engraving from a well-known atlas by de Lisle, printed in Paris in 1722. The map shows all of North America with interest centered, for those of us who live in California, on this territory which is pictured as cornucopia shaped and attached at the extreme northeast tip to the mainland. It is hand colored and is a valuable and interesting collectors' item. It will be framed and hung with a growing collection of old maps at the Custom House.

At the last regular meeting of the members of the Board of Directors of the Monterey History and Art Association, Mrs. W.R. Holman, a director, gave an inspirational talk on a program of activity and acquisition for the association to strive toward. Among the suggestions was one which the directors immediately accepted, and president Carmel Martin appointed J.F. van Loben Sels, Robert McKeever Jr., Dr. Wesley Heard, Mrs. Holman and Mrs. George Fuhrman, members of the committee to gather data on ways and means to eventually obtain a fireproof building to house a Monterey museum. Mrs. Holman offered a sum of money to start a fund to be used for such a building.

An honorary membership was presented by the directors to Mrs. Thomas W. Norris in appreciation of the interest her late husband showed in Monterey and California history and for his valuable collection which is being saved for posterity.