

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 13, 1953

Interesting Tidbits

Forty years ago there was quite a market for abalone shells in Monterey. In searching through the early day papers published here for items for "Report on Olden Days" we came across this item: "Three tons of abalone shells were placed on the wharf yesterday for shipment. The shells were from Point Lobos and are being shipped to Catalina Island, where they are utilized by the divers on the glass-bottomed boats for commercial purposes. They are planted in the bottom of the bay and brought to the surface by many divers who sell them to the tourists for fifty cents each."

Referring to Father James Culleton's book "Indians and Pioneers of Old Monterey" we find that Father Antonio de la Ascension on board the Tres Reyes, one of Viscaino's ships which entered Monterey Bay, tells in his diary of Monterey's peculiar shellfish, the abalone. The notations were made from Dec. 17, 1602 to Jan. 3, 1603.

In January, 1793, when Capt. George Vancouver of the British Navy visited Monterey, he noted: "The Englishmen saw the Indians building a church under the direction of the padres. The material was local sandstone and mortar made of abalone shells which abounded on the beach."

Miss Mary Louise Allen, the editor of the "Evangel" published by St. Mary's-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Pacific Grove, has unearthed this valuable and very interesting information, which we think will be of interest to our readers: "The two most beautiful windows in St. Mary's Church were designed and executed by Bruce Porter, the same artist who designed the monument to Robert Louis Stevenson in Portsmouth Square in San Francisco."

Mr. Porter, the artist, is still living in San Francisco, the city in which he was born on Feb. 23, 88 years ago. He received his education in San Francisco, England and France, and since 1891 he has engaged in stained glass work and mural painting. Numerous church windows in Northern California are the result of his genius. In addition to his art work he has been a writer of poems and criticism, and was an originator with Gellett Burgess of "The Lark," a famous San Francisco bibliophile of the 1890s. Burgess died in Carmel in 1952.

The window above the altar in St. Mary's-by-the-Sea depicts "The Annunciation" and is a memorial to Deaconess Helen Reed, known as "Sister Reed," the first deaconess in the Diocese of California's Episcopal Church. She died in April 1894. It was she who suggested a picture of the Annunciation as most appropriate for the altar window, little dreaming that it would eventually be placed there as a memorial to herself. It was Helen Reed who also named the church "St. Mary's-by-the-Sea."

Mr. Porter also designed the beautiful lily window in the church in 1921, under the direction of Cyrus McCormick, whose wedding ceremony was performed there. The window was a memorial to Mr. McCormick's wife, the former Miss Harriett Hammond of Chicago, who had been so charmed with the beauty and environment of the church that she decided to give up the fashionable wedding, planned for the spring in Chicago, and be married in St. Mary's. Forty relatives and friends came by private car from Chicago to Del Monte for the ceremony, March 4, 1890.

Of interest on the Peninsula will be the announcement by the Book-of-the-Month Club that the May selection is "The High and Mighty," by Ernest K. Gann, a Californian and the son of George K. Gann of Pebble Beach.

Ernest K. Gann's first novel was "Island in the Sky," which won him a wide audience and an enthusiastic press when it was published in 1944. He was a commercial pilot for years and flew with the American Transport Command during the War. He received his Distinguished Service and "Million-mile" awards as the result of having chalked up a million miles of flying as a pilot for a commercial airline.