

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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**'Having a Wonderful Time...'**

"Having a wonderful time; wish you were here" long ago took its place among world's popular expressions.

Whenever pen, pencil, crayon or lipstick are put to paper the odds are excellent that "having a wonderful time; wish you were here," or longer variations thereof, will be inscribed on whatever material is being used for correspondence. And this material today is usually the penny postcard—or should we say, its inflationary successor, the two-penny postcard.

Paul Speegle begins his comments on Number 1 of the series of Keepsakes of the Book Club of California with the above explanations. These illustrations of pictorial humor of the Gold Rush in California are edited by Carl I. Wheat, with comments by various authorities, and designed and printed by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco. The original is in the collection of the California State Library in Sacramento.

The reproduction of the original letterhead is printed on blue paper, as was the first letterhead. The original was printed by "Quirot & Co., California street, corner Montgomery St., San Francisco" "Decorating one side of the scene of idyllic splendor: a meadow of waving daffodils; a mountain brook, trilling over glistening rocks in the mid-afternoon sun; a desert of shimmering heat and endless reach, or perhaps a city street, or a herd of buffalo, a pretty girl, or ever a cartoon, bawdy and funny," is Speegle's description of the letterhead.

Speegle writes; "The affinity between humor and pathos is seldom more apparent than in the contrast between the rough jocularly of the four cartoons which embellish this letterhead and the letter which was written upon it. Addressing his mother, James Gill wrote from 'Plaservill, Eldorado Oc. California' on Aug. 22. 1852, and it is clear from his words that his heart is not bursting with happiness. He has learned that his father is dead; his own fortunes are conspicuous by their absence; he hasn't heard from any of his friends for seven long months, and there is a tinge of homesickness in the lines he had so laboriously penned to his mother. A first glance this might seem a far cry from the modern theme of 'having wonder time, etc.' And yet, I wonder if it is, I wonder if James Gill would have had it any other way."

"Those plates," he writes, "will Shoe you what a miner has two under goe and moad of living And a slit sktch mining and Cooking you will see wheaire He is sinking a shaft histing Dirt our by a winless he is in the Act of histing his pardner out Or letting him down at the depth of rom 20 to 100 feet...I have just arrived in this place yestrday from One eyed canyon about 15 miles in the mountains. It is a hard looking place a man can see out only by looking Strate toward heaven...I lived theaire about 2 munths wirked hard and maid but little therefore I renounce those diging and leave for betor."

"Surely," Paul Speegle concludes, "Here is the essence of the 2-penny postcard and its customary message! There were many of these multiple-cartoon letter sheets during the "fifties, and the miners found their use the readiest method of describing their lives in these far-away diggings. 'If my friend new how much a oald Californian prused a leter from his friends I think Tha would wright oftener,' says Gill, 'requesting everybody to Write soon'."

Speegle ends his comment with this notation: "Wish you were here, but—for goodness sake—if you can't come, at least you can write to me."