

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Coloma**

Coloma will be restored as it once was, the state's "first" historical site, the first queen of the mines. The California State Park Commission has disclosed its plans to return Coloma to the lusty days of 1848, when James Marshall picked up some glittering pieces of metal and turned the world upside down.

The discovery site is already a small state park. It will, if the projects reaches completion, once again see Sutter's Mill in operation, and the little town looking as it did. A possible, and very real, bar to this plan is the proposal to construct a dam below Coloma on the South Fork of the American River, a dam which would flood this, undoubtedly a most important site, historically and commercially, in California. The directors of the California Historical Society and the Monterey History and Art Assn., along with many other organizations in the state, have already filed a formal protect against this destruction.

A cheering bit of news comes from Sunnyvale in Santa Clara County. That far-sighted town has recently purchased the century-old house of Martin Murphy Jr., with a part of its once-extensive grounds, for preservation. The large white house, built to specifications in Bangor, Me., was disassembled, shipped around the Horn, and reassembled on grounds which then encompassed what is nearly all of the present town of Sunnyvale. The original furnishings and library of the home are intact, even to a large oil portrait of the original owner which hangs in the living room of the house. This cheering announcement was made in "Notes" from the California Historical Society.

The December meeting of the Board of Directors of the Monterey History and Art Assn. was one of the most interesting and profitable held in a long while. There were a goodly number of directors present including the president, Charles McHarry, J.F. van Loben Sels, Carmel Martin, John Martin, Howard Severance, Guy Curtis, Gabriel Burnette, Mmes. W.R. Holman, Maria Antonia Thompson, Mary Greene, Charles Mason, M.R. Gragg, Christine Raynsford, Robert Giet, W.M. O'Donnell, and Misses Margaret Jacks and Ethel Solliday.

The business of the meeting ranged from the discussion of the clean-up of Monterey's vacant lots to the entertainment for the members of the California Historical Societies when they hold an annual conference here in June of 1955.

Mrs. Greene, the Custom House Museum curator, had arranged a display of interesting historical items for the membership to view. There was a very handsome and old sea captain's rum chest, containing five quart size and five pint size square hand-blown bottles with gold decorations, which may prove to be Stiegel glass. If they are of Stiegel manufacture they probably date to the 1770s, for Henry William Stiegel first began making glass at Manheim, Pennsylvania, in 1771.

Placed on loan, for an indefinite time, by Mildred Mendia of San Jose, a descendant of the Amesti family of Monterey, is a "Mochila" an early California saddle cover, consisting of two pieces of leather approximately 24 by 35 inches, laced together, beautifully hand carved and some silk embroidery designs. There is a round hole in the leather which slips over the pommel of the saddle. It is a very old and very fine specimen of this finery of the early California vaqueros, which is also sometimes referred to as a Coraza. It had once been a possession of the Osio family, prominent in Monterey's early history.

In another exhibit were a number of fine examples of equipment used by the early whalers in Monterey. These are on loan from Hilda Duarte Brown and had belonged to her father, the late Manuel Duarte, who operated a boat and fishing supply store at the corner of Scott and Alvarado street for many years. In this collection is a harpoon, a barbed missile weapon, carrying a long cord, for striking whales or the like, according to the dictionary; and two steelyards, a device for weighting, consisting of a scale beam, counterpoise, and hooks. The article to be weighted was hung from the short end, and the counterpoise weight on the long end – again according to Webster. Mr. Duarte had often repeated to friends that these steelyards had been taken from the Custom House when this building had been abandoned. The harpoon had once been the property of Capt. Jose Pedro, a Portuguese whaler, who died in Monterey 52 years ago.

Also in the exhibit is the log of the Gypsy, which was wrecked on the beach at the end of Reeside street in New Monterey on Sept. 28, 1905.

These interesting items are on display in the Old Custom House Museum.