

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

February 12, 1954

### 'Sam Brannan'

"Sam Brannan, Builder of San Francisco" a biography by Louis J. Stellman is just off the press. Not only is the book interesting to collectors of Californiana but it is of interest on the Peninsula for the reason that the author resides in Carmel. He and his wife, Edith, who is an artist, live at the southwest corner of Ocean and Santa Fe streets, where they have been in residence for the past six years.

"San Brannan, the Builder of San Francisco" is written in the manner of popular "Western" fiction, the biography of a man who played a great role in the development of California, more perhaps, than any other man of his time. He helped to organize the historic vigilance committees which restored law and order in crime-ridden San Francisco during the hectic days of the gold rush.

Brannan printed San Francisco's first newspaper. The California Star, Jan. 9, 1847. He had arrived at Yerba Buena in July 1846, on the ship Brooklyn carrying 238 Mormons, with Elder Brannan in direct charge. On the ship was the printing equipment of the Prophet, a Mormon newspaper that had been published by Brannan in New York.

Stellman tells how Brannan performed the first marriage ceremony, preached San Francisco's first Protestant sermon, prompted its first school and started the first store in Sacramento Valley at Sutter's Fort which furnished the materials for historic Sutter's Mill which he christened Coloma after the Indians. He also tells the story of Brannan's rise as the state's first millionaire and how he made California one of the world's great wine-producing regions.

There is also the fascinating story as related by the author of "San Brannan, the Builder of San Francisco" of how this early Californian build railroads, established a curative spa at Calistoga—a combination of California and Saratoga—opened a bank and issued his own currency, then how poverty, illness and domestic troubles checked his fabulous career in the end. It is a fascinating story of each California.

Mr. Stellman's associations with Carmel goes back to the 1920s, or perhaps, earlier when he says "I had the pleasure of knowing Harry Leon Wilson, Fred Bechdolt,

Grace McGowan Cook and her sister, Alice McGowan; John Kenneth Turner, Jimmie Hopper and other writers. I knew George Sterling in San Francisco and Mary Austin in Santa Fe, New Mexico, after they had left Carmel"

For 30 years or more Mr. Stellman newspapered in San Francisco, freelancing some of the time, doing editorial writing and feature stories. He is a member of the Press and Union League Club of San Francisco and for more than 20 years belonged to the Author's Club of London. He sadly remembers that he has now resigned from that fine, old institution when it became apparent that he should never go back to London. Meanwhile he is living quietly in Carmel "which we have always loved."

Other books which Mr. Stellman has written include "Port O' Gold, first serialized in San Francisco Bulletin. "Mother Lode," "That Was a Dream Worth Building," "Mate O' Dreams" and "Other Poems," and numerous articles and stories published in over 25 magazines. "Mother Lode" is a popular reading in many California schools.

"Sam Brannan" is published by Exposition Press Inc. New York; \$3.50.